Pagan Holidays–or God's Holy Days–*Which?*

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Does it make any difference which days we observe—or whether we keep them? Does the Bible establish whether we are to keep certain days holy to God? Were these days given to ancient Israel only? Are they binding today only on the Jewish people, while Christians are commanded to keep holidays such as Christmas?

WHICH DAYS SHOULD WE KEEP?

IN THE seventh chapter of the book of Daniel is an amazing prophecy picturing for twenty-five hundred years into the future, from the day it was written, the course of the Gentile kingdoms.

Starting with the ancient Chaldean Empire of Nebuchadnezzar, this prophecy foretells the successive world rule of the Persian Empire, Alexander's Greco-Macedonian kingdom with its four divisions, and finally, of the mighty Roman Empire. Out of the original Roman Empire, symbolized by ten "horns" growing out of the head of a "beast," are pictured the ten resurrections of the Roman Empire that have continued since its fall to the present, and are scheduled to continue until the coming of Christ.

Among these ten kingdoms which have ruled in the Western world since the fall of Rome to the present, appeared another "little horn," whose "look was more stout than his fellows." In other words, another government, actually smaller, yet dominating over all the others. Students of prophecy recognize this "little horn" as a great religious hierarchy. And in the 25th verse of this prophecy, it is stated that this hierarchy shall "think to change *times* and *laws*."

How Time Was Changed

This same power is mentioned again in the 17th chapter of Revelation, here pictured as ruling over the kings and kingdoms of the earth, persecuting the true saints.

In every possible manner, this power has *changed* TIME!

God begins the days at sunset, but "the little horn" has changed it so the world now begins the day in the middle of the night by a man-made watch.

God begins the week with the ending of the true Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, but the world begins the working week in the middle of the night, the second day of the week.

God begins the months with the new moons, but this "little horn" has induced the world to begin the months according to a clumsy man-made calendar of heathen origin.

God begins the year in the early spring, when new life is budding in nature everywhere, but ancient heathen Rome caused the world to begin the year in the middle of dead winter.

God gave His children a true rest day, designed to keep them continually in the knowledge and true worship of the true God—a memorial of God's Creation—the seventh day of the week. But the "little horn" has fastened upon a deluded world the observance of the days on which the pagans worshipped the Sun, the first day of the week, called SUNday.

Pagan Origins

Ancient Rome's pagan holidays have been chained upon a heedless and deceived world. These include certain annual holidays—Christmas, New Year's, Easter, as well as many more, every one a pagan day—every one used to stimulate the sale of merchandise in the commercial markets. Upon honest investigation, the earnest seeker after truth learns that these days are all of heathen origin and pagan significance. He learns that he can have no part in them.

But is the Christian of today left without any annual holy days? Did God never give to His people annual holy days, as well as the weekly Sabbath? Are not ancient Rome's annual holidays mere counterfeits of God's true holy days, exactly as Sunday is a counterfeit of the true Sabbath?

Banishing Prejudice

Let us honestly open our Bibles, and prayerfully investigate. We are told to study—not argue, not to refute, but—to show

ourselves approved unto God—to learn God's will. We are commanded, as Christians, to grow in knowledge as well as in grace (II Peter 3:18). All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable to correct and to reprove us, where we have, through assumption, false teaching, or prejudice, been in error.

Most people have supposed that all the annual Sabbaths and feast days of Israel were done away. And yet Church history shows that the early true Church did, for more than four hundred long years at least—perhaps much longer—after Christ's resurrection, continue to keep and observe these annual holy days given by God!

And just as the Sunday observer is inclined to look, at first, upon any argument for the weekly Sabbath with prejudice—as a heresy—and to examine every argument only in an attitude of attempting to refute it, so it will be only human—only natural for us, if we are not on our guard against it, to look upon any presentation of these annual Sabbaths in the same spirit of prejudice.

But remember that "he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him" (Prov. 18:13).

Let us, therefore, in willing submission to God, to His will, with yielded hearts free from prejudice, with open minds desiring truth more than our own way, trembling before the sacred and holy Word of God, ask God humbly for the direction of His Holy Spirit. And in this prayerful, submissive, willing, yet careful and cautious attitude, study this question—proving all things.

Study This Twice

Let us warn, too, that certain objections will be sure to come to the mind—all of which, will be dealt with and explained later on. But unless the reader is careful to guard against it, the mere presence of this objection in his mind will, to him, overthrow each point as it's presented—and then, when the objections are later explained, the points made will not come back to the mind, unless the whole exposition of the subject is carefully studied again from the first.

And in each case, the objection will be one of the very arguments used by Sunday preachers in attempting to

overthrow the truth of the weekly Sabbath! For the weekly Sabbath and the annual Sabbaths stand or fall together. The arguments used against the annual Sabbaths will be the identical arguments used to overthrow the Sabbath—and if these arguments could hold, then they would abolish the weekly Sabbath! (For a complete explanation—proving the weekly Sabbath is for New Testament Christians — write for our free booklet, *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*)

Such arguments as "the annual Sabbaths are part of the law of Moses," or "they offered sacrifices on the annual Sabbaths," or "Colossians 2:16 does away with the annual Sabbaths," are not scriptural.

For the annual Sabbaths were not part of the law of Moses, but were observed before the ritualistic ordinances contained in the law of Moses were given. Sacrifices were offered on the weekly Sabbath, but this does not do away with the Sabbath. In fact, sacrifices were offered on *every* day of the year (Num. 28:3).

Colossians 2:16 refers, not alone to the annual Sabbaths, but to the annual days, the monthly new moons, *and* the weekly Sabbath. Whenever the Bible uses the expression "sabbath days" with new moons and holy days, it is referring to the weekly Sabbath days, the new moons and the annual holy days or feast days. The "sabbath days" of Colossians 2:16 refers to the *weekly* Sabbath. Compare I Chron. 23:31 with II Chron. 2:4, 31:3; Ezra 3:5; Neh. 10:33; Ezek. 46:3. If Colossians does away with the one, it also abolishes the other.

The Old Testament Church

When did the true Church begin? In Acts 7:38 we learn that the congregation of Israel was called the church in the wilderness, in the days of Moses. The English word "congregation" used throughout the Old Testament is only another rendering, having the same identical meaning, as the word "church" in the New Testament. The word translated "congregation" in the Old Testament is *ekklesia* in the Septuagint—the same identical Greek word that is always translated CHURCH in the New Testament.

Israel was both church and state. As a kingdom, it was for years ruled by a system of judges, over 50s, 100s, thousands, etc., later having a king. But as a congregation, or church, Israel was organized with a leader—Moses, Joshua, etc.—and the priests of the tribe of Levi. The law of Moses contained those ritualistic or ceremonial laws which were ADDED, because of transgressions, to the Old Covenant—added until Christ—to teach and instill into them the habit of obedience. These consisted of meat and drink offerings, various washings, physical ordinances. Also they had the sacrifices, as a substitute for the sacrifice of Christ.

Prior to the Law of Moses

In the 12th chapter of Exodus, while the Children of Israel were still in Egypt—long before any of the Law of Moses had been given—prior to the time when God revealed to Moses and the Israelites He would make the Old Covenant with them—we find God's annual holy days being observed.

And in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus we find a summary of these annual holy days or set feasts.

Now when God made the Sabbath for man, He gave man a rest day carrying great significance and purpose. To His Church in the wilderness, God said that the Sabbath was a covenant sign between Him and His people. A sign is a supernatural proof of identity. It is the sign by which we know that He is God. How does it prove that to us? "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested." It is a memorial of creation.

And creation is the proof of the existence of God. Creation identifies God. The Sabbath is a weekly memorial of creation. A weekly reminder of God's power to create. Therefore it identifies God to us—keeps us in the true memory and true worship of the true God. No other day but the seventh day of the week could have that great significance and meaning. It was designed to keep us in the true worship of God.

The Purpose of Holy Days

Now in like manner, when God gave His Church seven annual Sabbaths, God, in His wisdom, had a great purpose. These

days, too, were given to keep God's children in the true memory and worship of God by keeping us constantly in the understanding of God's great plan of redemption. For these annual days picture the different epochs in the plan of spiritual creation—mark the dispensations, and picture their meaning.

The whole story of spiritual regeneration was, in these feast days, to be reenacted year after year continually. They have vitally important symbolism and meaning.

It is an historic fact that any nation which ever profaned God's holy Sabbath (weekly), has lost contact with and knowledge of the true God, and gone into idolatry. The only nation which ever did keep God's Sabbath is the only one that kept the true memory and worship of the true God—and only when they kept the Sabbath. When ancient Israel began to profane God's Sabbath, they began to worship idols!

And in the same way, when in these New Testament times we have failed to observe God's annual Sabbaths we, as a nation and people, are without knowledge of God's true plan of reproducing Himself.

The so-called Christian churches today do not understand or teach what sin is—they do not teach that sin must be put away—they do not understand what man is, the purpose of life, the meaning of being born again, and of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit—they do not understand that God's Church, today, is not to convert the world, but to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom as a witness, to live a life of overcoming sin, enduring unto the end, and that the overcomers shall reign with Christ, being kings, and priests, in His Kingdom.

They do not understand that Christ is coming again, and those who preach the second coming fail to understand its meaning and purpose. They have no knowledge or conception of the good news of the coming Kingdom of God—the only true New Testament Bible gospel.

Not understanding these vital steps in the true plan of regeneration, the Christian churches teach that the Law is abolished. They teach the pagan doctrine of the immortality of the soul, going immediately to heaven or hell at death—and they teach that death is only life.

And all is confusion!

God's feasts, or holy days, or Sabbaths, were commanded to be kept year after year, and *forever!* We ask the reader to retain an open mind, for we shall prove that forever, in this case, means forever!

Thus God purposed to impress the truths these "high" Sabbaths picture upon all the minds of His children through all time, keeping His Church in the true understanding of His plan!

The Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread

Most churches teach that Christ finished the Plan of Redemption when He was crucified. But the very *first* event in God's great plan for man's regeneration was the death of Christ. We find the operation of this great Sacrifice beginning in Eden, when God killed a lamb or goat, in order to cover the nakedness (type of sin) of Adam and Eve with skins. We find it operating when Abel sacrificed a substitute lamb. And so the Passover is the first of these events picturing to God's children year by year His great plan.

Let us understand it.

Egypt is a type of sin. As God's people are today in "Babylon," and soon are to be delivered after God pours out His plagues upon Babylon, so they once were in Egypt, and were delivered after the pouring out of the plagues.

Just as professing Christians have been deceived and have no knowledge of true time and God's days, as well as the true worship of God, so it was with the children of Israel in Egypt.

For over two centuries they had been in severe bondage in Egypt—forced to work with taskmasters over them. There was no Bible—no written Word of God. They were not permitted to worship God as He had ordained. They were forced to work seven days a week. They had lost sight even of the true Sabbath—that is why God revealed to them the Sabbath in the wilderness of Sin (Ex. 16).

Passover Only the Start

At that time in Egypt they had also changed the proper time for commencing the year.

And so, on delivering His people from Egypt (sin), God straightened them out as to time. And, as the beginning of our salvation was wrought by Christ's death on the cross, so God said, *"This* month [in the spring] shall be unto you the *beginning of months . . ."* (Ex. 12:2).

Some few keep the beginning of God's feasts of salvation by observing Passover, but never go on to know the "depth of the riches" of God's grace pictured by the following feasts! Christ is not only the author, or beginner, but the finisher of our salvation!

On the tenth day of this first month the Israelites were instructed to take a lamb without blemish. They kept it until—not after—the 14th day of the same first month. At even, at dusk as the Jewish translation has it—between the two evenings, or between sunset and dark—the Passover lamb was killed.

This was in, not after, the 14th day. They shed the blood of the lamb, picturing Christ's sacrifice to come. They ate the flesh in that night. At midnight the death angel came, but passed over every house where the blood had been sprinkled.

There are some very important details it is vital that we notice at this point; perhaps we have not seen them before. It proves that the Passover should be observed the 14th, not the 15th.

Passover 14th, Not 15th

Notice Exodus 12. Verse 6, they shall kill the lamb at dusk (Jewish official translation). Verse 8, they shall eat the flesh in that night—still the 14th. Verses 9-11 continue to describe how it shall be roasted and eaten—the time is still the same night—the 14th. Verse 12: "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn . . ."—still same night—the 14th.

Now notice carefully the section beginning verse 21. Here. are more detailed directions for striking the blood on the doorposts—the time this was done, as proved above, was the night part of the 14th. Notice carefully verse 22: ". . . strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason: and *none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning."* Notice that carefully! None were permit-

ted to leave their houses that night. They remained in their houses until morning! They remained there all night!

Now read on in verse 29. At midnight (the 14th) the Lord smote the firstborn of Egypt. Verse 30, Pharaoh rose up in the night. This was of course after the death angel passed at midnight, and therefore after midnight.

He called for Moses and Aaron. This must have taken some time, still the same night but after dawn. Verse 33, the Egyptian people were urgent to get rid of the Israelites. Verse 35, the Israelites borrowed (demanded) of the Egyptians silver and gold and clothing, and spoiled the Egyptians. When? Surely this borrowing and spoiling of the Egyptians took several hours. The Israelites lived in the land of Goshen, apart from the Egyptians. The Israelites were forbidden to leave their houses until morning—so this spoiling and borrowing took place through the *day time* of the 14th day.

Exodus 24 Hours After Passover

But—notice this highly important point—the Israelites did not go out from the land of Egypt until that night—the 15th of Abib! Notice the section composed of verses 40-42: ". . . even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt: *this is that night* of the Lord to be observed. . . ." Which is the night to be observed? The night they came out of Egypt. They went out of Egypt, not during the daytime the 14th, but after that day had ended—after the sun had set—the following night—on the 15th of Abib! And that night, the 15th, is to be observed!

The following verses, beginning verse 43, form a new section, and refer again to Passover—the 14th day.

Now, notice Deuteronomy 16:1: "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the Lord thy God: for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt *by night*." Notice it, they did not go out of Egypt, until night. And this night was the 15th, not the 14th. Further proof?

Notice now Numbers 33:3: "And they departed from Rameses in the first month, *on the fifteenth day of the first*

month; on the morrow after the passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians."

There it is in plain language.

Now some believe that they killed the lamb between noon and sunset the 14th—about 3 p.m., near the end of the day; ate it that night—the 15th (claiming that is when the Passover was eaten, and when we should take it today) and then went on out of Egypt that same night. But this theory will not hold water, in view of all these scriptures, and those following through Exodus 12.

The Israelites were not permitted to leave their houses that night after eating the lamb. They remained in their own houses—in the land of Goshen—until daylight. Then they went to their Egyptian neighbors, and borrowed from them and spoiled them. There were millions of them. It took time to notify them. It took time to do all this. It could not have been done after midnight, when Pharaoh rose up, and still have gotten out of Egypt the same night. The Israelites were in their own houses in Goshen all that night. Exodus 12:10 further proves this. Whatever remained of their roasted lamb uneaten until morning they were to burn with fire. That shows they stayed in their homes until morning.

They did not leave Egypt until after that day ended—after nightfall again, during the night part of the fifteenth.

IN the 14th, Not After

Now to connect one other vital point, turn to Numbers 28:16-17. "IN the fourteenth day [not AFTER IT] . . . is the passover of the Lord. And *in the fifteenth day* [not before it] of this month *is the feast:* seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten."

Leviticus 23:5-6 says the same thing. Notice the Passover is not the 15th, but the 14th. "In it" is not after it is past. And notice, too, the feast mentioned here is not the 14th (though the Passover is elsewhere called a feast), but the feast day is the 15th. The seven-day period begins the 15th. The 15th is the first of the seven days of unleavened bread.

However, since leaven was put out of the houses during the 14th day, it came to be called one of the days of

unleavened bread by New Testament times, but when this is done, eight days are included in the term "days of unleavened bread." The entire eight-day period is, in New Testament usage, sometimes called by the name "Passover."

But the seven-day period begins the 15th, after the 14th, or Passover, has ended.

The 14th day is the Passover. It is the first of God's festivals. It is not the feast day mentioned here. In the fifteenth day is the feast. Let us get that distinction clearly in mind. It is the FIFTEENTH that is the FEAST—the 14th is the Passover. This feast day begins after Passover has ended.

Now with these facts well in mind, let us turn back to Exodus 12. Notice beginning verse 14. "And this day shall be unto you for a *memorial;* and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance *for ever.* Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread. . . . And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation . . ." (verses 14-16).

What day is established as a memorial—not a shadow, a memorial—a feast—to be kept forever? Notice, it is the day that is the feast—"Ye shall keep it a feast." It is the day that is the feast day—the 15th Abib, not the 14th—*not* the Passover!

This day is the feast day—a memorial, to be kept a Sabbath, or holy convocation, forever! Seven days are included, and we have shown that the seven-day period begins the 15th, after Passover has passed. "In the fourteenth is the Passover, but in the fifteenth day is the feast—seven days."

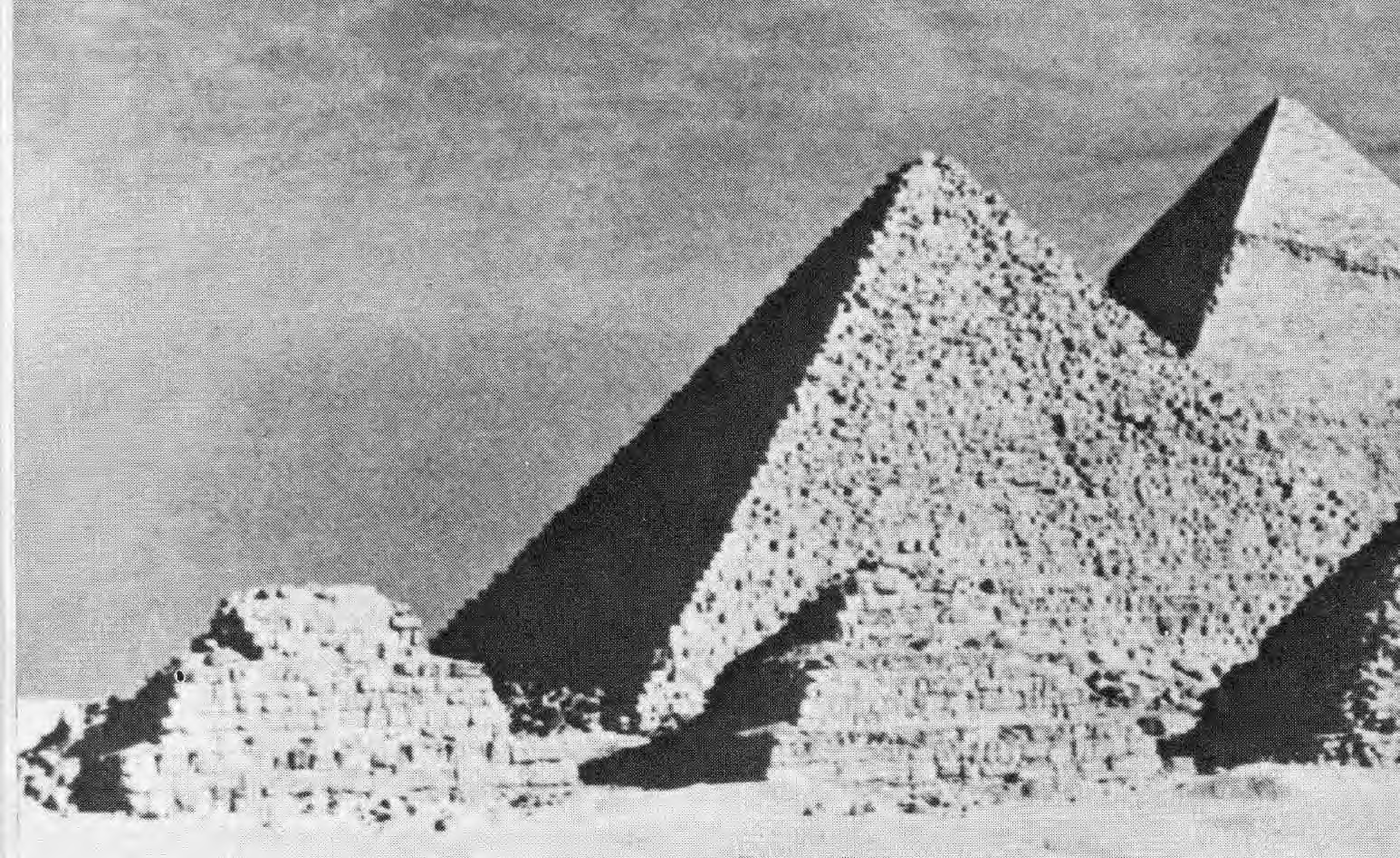
Many have always believed the day here spoken of, and ordained forever, was the Passover, or 14th. But it is not—it is the 15th day.

Now this day—the 15th—is established a holy convocation. Look in the dictionary. A "convocation" is an assembly of the people where their presence is commanded, under power and authority. A "*holy* convocation" is a religious assembly, for purposes of worship. The weekly Sabbath is a holy convocation. So is Abib 15th. Our presence is commanded, under God's power and authority. But let us continue.

Notice now, beginning verse 16: "And in the first day [of the seven, 15th of Abib], there shall be an holy convocation, and

NISAN (ABIB)

13	14 PASSOVER	15 ANNUAL SABBATH	16	17 WEEKLY SABBATH
NIGHT / DAY 1	2	3	4	



1 Passover lamb eaten.

2 Israelites receive gold and jewels of Egyptians (Ex. 12:35-36).

3 Israel leaves Egypt by night (Deut. 16:1).

4 After celebrating the Feast they arrived at Succoth (Ex. 12:37).

5 Pharaoh hears the people have fled (Ex. 14:5).

SEVEN DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

18	19	20	21 ANNUAL SABBATH	22
5	6	7	8 9	



Wide World Photos

6 Israel leaves all civilization and enters Egyptian wilderness (Ex. 13:18, 20).

7 Pharaoh's army overtakes Israel encamped at Pi-hahiroth (Ex. 14:9).

8 God leads Israelites through Red Sea to safety before daylight.

9 Songs of Moses and Miriam. Great celebration on final day of Unleavened Bread.

in the seventh day [21st of Abib] there shall be an holy convocation to you. . . . And ye shall observe the *feast of unleavened bread;* for *in this selfsame day* [the *fifteenth* Abib] have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe *this day* [the fifteenth, not the 14th] in your generations by an ordinance *for ever*" (Ex. 12:16-17).

There it is! *Before* the ceremonial law of Moses! The day established as a Sabbath, or holy convocation forever, is the feast day, the selfsame day on which they went out of Egypt, and they went out on the 15th, not the 14th (Numbers 33:3).

This day is a memorial, not a shadow of the cross. A memorial of deliverance from Egypt, which pictures to us deliverance from sin!

To keep us constantly in the memory of the great fact that, having had our sins forgiven by Christ's blood (pictured by the 14th) we are not to stop there, and remain in sin, but to go out away from sin! Why should we observe the 14th, picturing remission of past sins, and then refuse to continue the Feast of Unleavened Bread, picturing the coming out from sin—seven days of unleavened bread symbolizing and picturing complete putting away of sin, or, in other words, the keeping of the Commandments?

Not Abolished With Old Covenant

Observe that the days of unleavened bread are a period, having two high-day Sabbaths. And this period is established forever—while the Israelites were still in Egypt—before one word of the ceremonial law of Moses had been given or written—before God even proposed the Old Covenant!

What the law of Moses, or the Old Covenant, did not bring or institute, they cannot take away! And in Fenton's translation, we find the 17th verse translated thus: ". . . Consequently keep this period as an everlasting institution." The whole period is included.

This alone ought to prove that the holy days—and the seven days of unleavened bread—are binding today, and forever!

Now, if these texts apply to the 15th, not the 14th, as they assuredly do, and is here conclusively proved, then is the

Passover forever? Indeed it is! But these texts above refer to the feast, and not the Passover. In the section beginning Exodus 12:21 the Passover is again referred to, and verse 24 establishes it forever!

Purpose of Festival

But let us learn the full significance of this. Why did God ordain these feast days? What was His great purpose? Turn now to Exodus 13, verse 3: "And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt. . . ." This was the 15th of Abib. Verses 6, 8-10: "Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the Lord . . . This is done because of that which the Lord did"—(a MEMORIAL)—"and it shall be for a sign"—that is, having also a future meaning—"unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes"—having to do with both works and will—why?—"that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth. . . . Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance. . . ."

Can you see the wonderful meaning? Do you grasp the true significance of it all? Do you see God's purpose? The Passover only pictures the death of Christ for the remission of sins that are past (Rom. 3:25). The accepting of His blood does not forgive sins we may later commit; it does not give license to continue in sin. Therefore when we accept it, our sins are forgiven only up to that time—past sins.

But shall we stop there with only past sins forgiven? We are still flesh beings. We still shall suffer temptations. Sin has held us in its clutch—we have been slaves to sin, in its power. And we are powerless to deliver ourselves from it! We have been in bondage to sin. Let us understand the picture—the meaning.

Quitting Sin Utterly

To what extent shall we put away sin? Not partially, but completely! And, as leaven is also a type of sin (I Cor. 5:8)—leaven puffs up, and so does sin—and, as seven is God's number symbolizing completeness, we are to follow the Passover with seven days of unleavened bread!

The picture—the meaning—the symbolism, is not complete with Passover alone. Passover pictures the acceptance of

Christ's blood for the remission of past sins. It pictures the crucified—the dead—Christ.

Shall we leave Christ symbolically hanging on the cross? The seven days of unleavened bread following Passover picture to us the complete putting away of sin, the keeping of the Commandments—after past sins are forgiven.

They picture the life and work of the risen Christ—who ascended to the throne of God where He is now actively at work in our behalf as our High Priest, cleansing us of sin—delivering us completely from its power!

To observe the Passover alone, and then fail to observe the seven days of unleavened bread, means, in the symbolism, to accept Christ's blood, and then to continue in sin—to erroneously say the Law is done away, that we are under grace alone, meaning license, to continue in sin!

The seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread picture the keeping of the Commandments, which is another way of saying the putting away of sin.

God's true Church is to have these feast days, the first of which is a memorial picturing deliverance from sin, in OUR right hand and forehead, as God's sign, in order that we shall keep His commandments. And since the forehead is the seat of the intellect, and symbolizes acceptance, and the right hand symbolizes work, we have this sign of God there by accepting this truth about the holy days and Days of Unleavened Bread, and by NOT WORKING on these holy days! Not only is the weekly Sabbath God's sign (Ex. 31:12-17) but annual Sabbaths are signs as well!

Notice how marvelously this ordinance pictures the plan of redemption. I remember one year, during the last of these Sabbaths, 21st Abib, one housewife mentioned she had found a half slice of leavened bread behind some things in her home, during the days of unleavened bread. Of course, she had put it out of the house immediately.

Another said she had found a can of baking powder half full, which she did not know she had. Another found a slice of bread and some yeast. All had put the leaven out as soon as discovered.

How true to life is the picture! How often do we, after we think we have put away sin, discover hidden sins or habits we

did not know we had—or thought we had overcome? They must be overcome and put away, as soon as discovered.

The Perfect Picture

But let us notice the wonderful picture further. The children of Israel started out of Egypt, the night of the 15th of Abib, as we must, willingly, of our own accord, start out of sin as soon as we accept the blood of Christ. They started out on their own power—and we must make the start ourselves.

But they did not get far until Pharaoh pursued after them (Ex. 14:5-7). If Egypt is a type of sin, then surely Pharaoh must picture Satan; the army of Egypt, Satan's demons.

While Israel was in Egypt they were Pharaoh's slaves, helpless and powerless under his taskmasters—just as the sinner is in the power of the devil. But when Israel took the blood of the lamb, then God acted, and as a result Pharaoh released Israel. When *we* accept Christ's blood, GOD acts, and the devil must release us.

And, as the Israelites went out with a high hand (Numbers 33:3), in great exultation and elation over their deliverance from bondage, so does the newly begotten Christian start out his Christian life—up in the clouds of happiness and joy. But what happens?

The devil and sin immediately pursue after the newly begotten son of God—and soon the new and inexperienced Christian finds he is down in the depths of discouragement, and tempted to give up and quit.

Notice Exodus 14, beginning verse 10—as soon as the Israelites saw this great army pursuing them, they lost their courage. Fear came over them. They began to grumble and complain. They saw it was impossible for them to get away from Pharaoh and his army, because he was too powerful for them. And they were helpless. So it is with us.

Our Strength Not Sufficient!

But notice the message of God to them through Moses: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord . . . for the Egyptians . . . ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you"! How wonderful!

Helpless, we are told to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. He shall fight for us. We cannot conquer Satan and sin, but He can. It is the risen Christ—our High Priest—who will cleanse us—sanctify us—deliver us—who said He would never leave us nor forsake us!

We cannot keep the Commandments in our own power and strength. But Christ IN US can keep them! We must rely on Him in faith.

Notice verse 19. The angel that had gone before, showing the Israelites the way, now went behind them, getting between them and their enemy, protecting them. And then God parted the waters of the Red Sea. ". . . and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left" (verse 22). In Isaiah 55:1 and John 7:37-39, the waters are a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

The living waters of God are a wall to us, on our right hand and on our left, guiding us in the true path, making the path, protecting us in it. But when Pharaoh and his army attempted to follow after Israel in this divinely created path, these same waters completely covered them, as the Holy Spirit removes and covers our sins, and the Israelites saw them no more! What a wonderful picture!

No Sacrifices Originally

Thus we see the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as well as the Passover, was ordained and established forever, prior to the Old Covenant. Let us be consistent about this. Opponents tell us these are in the law of Moses. We reply they existed before the law of Moses, are carried over in the New Testament, and therefore are binding today.

Notice especially, that originally there were no sacrifices—no meat and drink ordinances—held on these days. See Jeremiah 7:22-23. These days were not instituted for the purpose of the sacrifices as some have wrongly supposed. These holy days are memorials, and twice plainly called such. Where do we find such plain language calling the Sabbath a memorial? (See also Lev. 23:24.)

The Sabbath, too, existed before the law of Moses. It was made holy unto the Lord before the Mosaic law was given.

When the law of Moses came, with its sacrificial

ordinances and meat and drink offerings, then these sacrifices and meat and drink offerings were instituted, temporarily—until Christ—to be held, some daily, some on the weekly Sabbath, and some on the first of each month, and some on each of the annual holy days.

But, mark well this fact! Where we find these sacrifices and meat and drink offerings instituted on the holy days we find them also on the weekly Sabbath. The same chapters in the law of Moses adding them to the annual days also add them to the weekly days.

The argument that these sacrifices held on these days does away with the days applies equally to the Sabbath! If this argument abolishes one, it abolishes also the other. The Sunday preachers argue that these sacrifices do away with the Sabbath. We deny it—why? The Sabbath existed before these sacrifices were added. The same is true of the holy days! They began, too, before the ritualistic law of Moses!

Sacrifices on Weekly Sabbath

Let us notice Numbers 28: First, the offerings by fire day by day, the "morning-evening" sacrifice. Second, verses 9-10, burnt meat offerings, and drink offerings every Sabbath. Third, verses 11-15, new moons. Then, verse 16, to end of chapter 29, the annual days.

Now we know these meat and drink offerings, by fire, were typical, and were done away. But are the seven weekdays done away? Is the weekly Sabbath done away? Is the first day of each month done away? Not in God's sight. Then neither are the annual holy days of the Lord done away!

The sacrifices were typical, and they came with the law of Moses, and they went with it. But the days on which they were held were not typical, did not come with the law of Moses, and did not go with it.

The days are binding forever! As the Sabbath is a memorial, so are the holy days!

Commanded in New Testament

And now we wish to show a New Testament command—more plain, more direct, than any we can find for the weekly Sabbath—to keep these annual holy days!

Observe again Numbers 28:16-17: "IN the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the Lord. And in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten."

This feast was not the 14th, but the 15th. It was the Passover, when the lamb was killed, that was the 14th. The daylight part of the 14th was the preparation for the feast (Matt. 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14). Note, in Jesus' day the Jews celebrated *their* passover one day late according to the tradition of the elders (John 18:28).

Let us get this point thoroughly established in our minds, for if this is true, as it is, then all of these days are still binding upon us, by New Testament, as well as Old Testament authority!

Notice Matthew 26:5. The chief priests and the scribes, conspiring to kill Jesus, said: "Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people." They hastened so they could take and kill Him the day *before* the feast, or on the 14th Abib (Nisan).

Mark 14:2 says the same thing. Now to establish that the feast day was the day after the Passover festival, and that it was the high day Sabbath—the day after Jesus was crucified, notice John 13:29: "For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag [was treasurer—Fenton translation], that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast. . . ." Surely this proves the feast was the following day—the 15th Abib (Nisan), as all these scriptures positively affirm. For further information on this vital subject, write for our free booklet *The Resurrection Was Not On Sunday.*

Now let us examine carefully I Corinthians 5:7-8. Churches have applied this to the Passover. Notice it does not say, nor apply to, Passover at all. Let us willingly, prayerfully, study to see what it does say:

". . . For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: *therefore* LET US KEEP THE FEAST. . . . " Notice it. Because Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed, therefore let us of the NEW Testament dispensation—because Christ had died—keep, what? Notice it! Not the Passover here which was on the 14th Abib (Nisan)—but let us keep the feast—which was the

15th! The high-day Sabbath of John 19:31! The annual holy day. And, in a larger sense, the feast included all seven of the days of unleavened bread, including the second holy day, or Sabbath, on the 21st Abib (Nisan)! We cannot escape this, if we are yielded to the Lord and the Word of God! There it is, in plain language, in the New Testament! Because Christ was crucified, therefore let us keep the feast! The 14th was the Passover, but in the 15th day of this month is the feast! Let us no longer apply that to the Passover, for it says "feast."

Days of Unleavened Bread Kept by Paul and the New Testament Church

It is faithfully recorded in the New Testament that the Church, during the period its history covers, was keeping those days!

In Acts 20:6: "We sailed away from Philippi *after the days of unleavened bread.*" Paul and companions plainly had observed the days of unleavened bread at Philippi. The Holy Spirit could never have inspired such words otherwise.

Notice also Acts 12:3: "Then were the days of unleavened bread." Why this, if those days had, in God's sight, ceased to exist?

Notice, it is not anyone ignorant of what was abolished making this statement. It is Almighty God saying it through inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This was years after the crucifixion. The days of unleavened bread still existed, or the Holy Spirit could not have inspired "then were the days of unleavened bread."

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PENTECOST

IS THIS the *only* "day of salvation"? Most churches generally teach that all who die "unsaved," or do not "get saved" before the second coming of Christ, can never receive salvation.

They assume there is a great contest in progress between Christ and Satan. They believe Christ came to save the world, and by means of all these churches, through which He is desperately trying to "get the world saved."

On the other hand, the clever deceptive devil is doing all he can to prevent people from being "saved." And they seem to believe there is a time limit on the contest.

We are now near the time for the Second Coming of Christ, but when Christ returns to earth in person He will find Himself helpless—utterly unable to save the world from Satan's clutch—because then "it will be too late." "Probation will be closed," as one denomination expresses it.

This paganized teaching represents Satan as far more powerful than God.

The Answer Revealed

The New Testament Church of God was founded on a Sunday. It started on the annual Sabbath day called "Pentecost" or "Feast of Firstfruits." Also called the "Feast of Weeks."

The New Testament Church continued, year after year, to keep this annual Sabbath, Pentecost, as we shall show.

And God gave this festival to His people in order to reveal, and to keep them continually informed, that the present dispensation is only the first, preliminary "harvest of souls."

As already explained, God's purpose in giving His Church His annual holy days was to keep His children constantly in true understanding of God's great plan.

To accomplish this, God took the yearly material harvest seasons in ancient Israel as the picture of the spiritual harvest of souls.

In the Holy Land there are two annual harvests. First, is the spring grain harvest. Second, comes the fall harvest. God intended His holy days to picture to *His* Church repeatedly year by year the fact that only those He Himself calls during this age can become His begotten children now! And we are merely the firstfruits of the great spiritual harvest!

The Wave Sheaf

But let us continue the central passage which summarizes all the holy days—Leviticus 23.

Here we find *all* of God's festivals proclaimed holy convocations, in the one chapter. First is the weekly convocation day, the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. Then, beginning verse 4, follows a list of the annual festivals, also commanded assemblies, "which ye shall proclaim in their seasons."

First of these is the Passover, followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread with the two annual Sabbaths. Beginning verse 9, we find instructions for the wave-sheaf offering. The Israelites were not allowed to harvest any of the early grain crop until this day (verse 14). Then, on the day following the weekly Sabbath, in a solemn ceremony of the Levitical priesthood (the rituals were mere substitutes and therefore not practiced today), the first sheaf of grain was cut. This event always occurred during the days of unleavened bread (see Joshua 5). The sheaf was then brought to the priest. The priest solemnly waved it before the Eternal to be accepted for them.

This pictures the *resurrected* Christ ascending to heaven to be accepted by His Father as the very first human to be actually born of God—the firstfruit of the first harvest of

souls! By comparing John 20:17 with Matthew 28:9, you will see that Christ presented Himself before the Father on the morning after His resurrection the previous evening (I Cor. 15:20, 23; Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15, 18). This fulfillment of the wave-sheaf offering actually occurred on Sunday, the morrow after the Sabbath during the days of unleavened bread.

How to Figure Pentecost

Next comes Pentecost. The word "Pentecost" is a Greek word, used in the New Testament, but not in the Old. It signifies "fiftieth (day)." In the Old Testament this feast is called "Feast of Firstfruits," and "Feast of Weeks."

Notice the properly translated plain instruction beginning Leviticus 23:15: "And ye shall *count* unto you *from* [*on*, or *beginning with*] the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days. . . ." And that fiftieth day is Pentecost!

"And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a *statute forever* in all your dwellings *throughout your generations*" (verse 21).

All other holy days or festivals come on definite days of definite months. But this one annual Sabbath must be determined by counting. It is very simple and plain.

It is of very grave importance that we figure the right day. This day, and this only, is made holy by the Eternal Creator. Suppose at the same time the Church of God was founded, the apostles had miscounted, And "when the day of Pentecost was fully come" (Acts 2:1) they, instead of being all *with one accord* in one place were in discord, some having observed the day preceding, and some waiting until the following day!

The Pharisees, who gained complete control of Jewish religious observances shortly after the middle of the first century A.D., figured (incorrectly—that is, from the wrong starting point) beginning with the day after the first *annual* Sabbath.

Before that time, however, the high priests of the family

Boethus, who were Sadducees, had been in control of matters concerning the festivals in Jerusalem. The Boethusians always counted beginning with the morrow after the *weekly* Sabbath, the day we call Saturday, which fell within the days of unleavened bread. This historical information has been preserved for us in the *Mishna.* which was set in writing about A.D. 200:

"The Boethusians say: 'The cutting of the sheaf does not take place at the end of the day of the feast [the first of the seven days of unleavened bread], but only at the end of the next regular Sabbath' " (*Menahoth,* 10, 3).

This practice had been handed down among the priests from generation to generation. And their method of counting was done as long as they remained in control of the Temple and its rituals. Samaritans and Karaites (Jewish sect dating from the eighth century A.D.) have also continued to count from the weekly Sabbath, the seventh day of the week.

On a Sunday

Starting then to count from the offering of the wave sheaf, with that Sunday as day number one, we will always come out on another Sunday—but NOT always on the same day of the month. It is something which must be "counted" each and every year. Neither in the Hebrew (or biblical) calendar, nor in the Roman calendar which is commonly used today, can the day of Pentecost ever become fixed on a set day of the month.

Quoting again from the *Mishna,* and speaking about the traditional practice which had been followed in Jerusalem before the Pharisees took complete control, "[The Boethusians say:] Pentecost always falls on the day after the Sabbath" (*Chagigah,* 2, 4).

This makes very clear the meaning of the last part of Leviticus 23:15 and the beginning of verse 16: ". . . seven *sabbaths* shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh *sabbath* shall ye number fifty days."

Deuteronomy 16:9

A second and perhaps for some a simpler instruction for counting to Pentecost is found in Deuteronomy 16:9-10: "*Seven weeks* shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number

the *seven weeks* from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn. And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks [Pentecost] . . . ."

This means of counting is also referred to in Numbers 28:26: "Also in the day of the firstfruits [Pentecost], when ye bring a new meat offering unto the Lord, *after your weeks be out,* ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work."

Because seven weeks were counted, the festival of Pentecost was also known as the "feast of weeks" (Deut. 16:10).

Meaning of Pentecost

Passover symbolized Christ's sacrifice for the remission of our sins, and the days of unleavened bread the putting away of sin. Pentecost pictures the first part of the spiritual harvest—the calling out of the Church—the called-out ones—which, for the New Testamaent dispensation, began on Sunday—Pentecost, June 17, A.D. 31. On that day the Holy Spirit came to dwell within flesh, as prophesied by Joel.

On the fiftieth day (Pentecost) in Old Testament times, two "wave loaves" (Lev. 23:17, 20) were brought out of the habitations of the congregation as the firstfruits unto the Lord. Just so the New Testament Church was gathered out of this world as the firstfruits of His salvation, in fulfillment of the meaning of the wave loaves.

We have all, if we have been converted, become a part of that New Testament Church. We have become part of what was symbolized by those wave loaves.

And just as the wave *sheaf* was lifted up into the air and waved, symbolizing Christ's trip to heaven and return, so the wave *loaves* were lifted up and waved, symbolizing that we too shall for a moment leave this solid earth when we ascend to meet Him in the air (I Thess. 4:16-17) before we return with Him to stand on the Mount of Olives as He begins His millennial rule (Acts 1:11; Zech. 14:3-4).

Most Not Now Called

God has not cast away His people, Israel. But He blinded them for a temporary period of time so that through their fall,

salvation came to the Gentiles, who, through Christ, are individually grafted in, or spiritually adopted into, the family of Israel (Rom. 11).

This is the dispensation when God is calling a people for His name to be kings and priests, reigning with Christ in the Kingdom during the thousand years (Rev. 5:10).

"After this"—after this dispensation of taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name—"I will return," promises the Eternal. What for? "And will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I [*Christ,* not men] will set it up."

Why? "That the residue of men might seek after the Lord." (Acts 15:14-17—study this again!)

During this present Church age, the descendants of ancient Judah and Israel are blinded. After this, Christ will return, and then the rest of men—blinded Israel, and Gentiles alike, will seek after the Lord when Satan is chained and Christ reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords!

Those of the firstfruits of His salvation, made immortal, will then reign with Him as kings and priests in the wonderful work of building a new civilization.

During this time Israel is mostly blinded *until* the fullness of the Gentiles come in; and so (Rom. 11:25) all Israel shall, then, be saved from sin; for the Deliverer, Christ, shall come out of Zion! All Israel shall be brought to repentance and saved from sin—how? Because Christ turns ungodliness from mortal Israel by forgiving sin.

Now, in this dispensation, Israel has not believed, and the tabernacle of David is fallen down (Rom. 11:31-32), that, through the mercy of the Gentiles and the small "elect" in Israel, picked out in this age, acting as kings and priests with Christ, they, also, then, may obtain mercy! How wonderful is God's great plan of redemption, when we understand it, as we see it pictured in these annual holy days!

Only First Harvest Now

In James 1:18 and Romans 8:23, for example, the saints of this dispensation are called the firstfruits of God's salvation. This dispensation, and the picking out of these people to bear His name, began on the day of Pentecost. This feast annually

Colossians 2:16

Colossians 2:16 was written as a warning to the Gentile Christians at Colosse to protect them from false teachers —teachers who were subtly perverting the message Paul taught. Notice what Paul wrote: "Let no *man* therefore judge you in meat, or in drink [margin — for *eating or drinking],* or in respect [any part or portion connected with the observance] of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" (Col. 2:16).

The original Greek in verse 16 for "meat, or in drink" — *en broosei* and *en posei* — means "in eating and in drinking."

There is no mention of the abolition of God's Law or His holy days. Nothing is done away in these verses. In fact, it is just the opposite. The very criticism the Colossians were receiving about their observance of these days *proves* they *were* keeping them. How could they be criticized "with regard to" days they were not keeping?

The once-pagan Colossians never kept these holy days of God before! They were heathen prior to conversion. Now that they had learned the Gospel, they were keeping holy the days God made holy. And Paul is warning them *not to return* to or be influenced by their old pagan ways — the ways of those who hated God's Law and His festivals.

"Let no man therefore judge you . . ." (verse 16) in these matters, said Paul, "but [rather] the body of Christ" (Col. 2:17, last part).

This verse has troubled many. Yet it should not. Notice that the word "is" in the King James Version is in italics. It does not appear in the original. The original Greek says only, ". . . but, the body of Christ." What is the body of Christ? How does Paul use this expression in Colossians?

Turn to chapter 1. In verse 18 we find that Christ "is the head of the body, *the church.*" See also Colossians 2:19.

The true Church of God is the body of Christ. Just as the Spirit of God once dwelled in the earthly body of Jesus Christ so now the Holy Spirit dwells in each member of the Church and together the members constitute one body, doing the very work Christ did. The Church is therefore Christ's body today! And Christ is the Head as the husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:23).

Paul is declaring in Colossians that no unauthorized person is to sit in judgment of a true Christian's conduct. Man does not determine how we should live. But it is the responsibility of the Church — the body of Christ — to determine these matters! The Church is to teach how to observe the festivals — to explain the meaning of self-control in eating and drinking, etc.

So these little-understood verses ought to be translated clearly: "Let no man therefore judge you . . . but [rather let] the body of Christ [determine it]." Let Christ's Body judge these Church matters. Greek scholars recognize the last clause "but [rather] the body of Christ" demands that a verb be added, but have often not seen that the missing verb should be supplied from the most logical and grammatically parallel clause so as to read properly "Let the body of Christ judge [these matters]"!

pictures this great event—this great "mystery" dispensation—in God's redemptive plan!

Notice, too, that these feasts, Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost, fall at the beginning of the year, and the great events they picture occur at the very beginning of the plan of salvation!

The group of holy days coming at the END of the year all symbolize tremendous events in God's plan of redemption to occur, yet future, at the end of the dispensation! They all come in the seventh month—and their fulfillment will introduce the seventh thousand-years since creation!

The churches of this world today teach it is the mission of the Church to save the world. They teach that all who ever shall be saved are being saved, now, in this present dispensation. They teach that "probation ENDS" at, or prior to, the Second Coming of Christ.

If this be true, what a failure is God's plan! Only a very, very few have been truly saved in this dispensation. One third of all living on earth today have never even heard the only name whereby we may be saved!

Are they—the majority of all living, eternally lost because they never heard—lost and condemned without a chance? The common teaching is that God has cast away His people Israel, and they are eternally doomed and lost. Had they been keeping these annual holy days, commanded to be kept forever—all kept faithfully by the New Testament Church as recorded in Acts and in church history—they would have understood God's wonderful plan.

We are not to convert everyone in the world in this age, but to declare the Gospel. What Gospel? The good news of the Kingdom—the good news of the thousand years of restitution of all things when Christ returns to reign in power and great glory!

Let us understand this. During this time Israel is blinded in part—but only until the completion of this Gentile dispensation. During this time, only the minority of Gentiles—Chinese, people of India and Russia—have even heard the name of Christ.

The good news of the coming Kingdom is to be preached as a witness. Many have been called during this time, but only

few actually chosen, and still fewer have remained faithful to the end.

They—the people picked out for His name—shall be made immortal and shall reign during the thousand years of the Kingdom upon earth. Then Israel's blindness will be removed. They were blinded until the end of Gentile times. The heavens received Jesus until these times of restitution of all things.

Those now gathered, since that day of Pentecost, June 17, A.D. 31, are the firstfruits only, of God's plan of salvation. This dispensation, then, is picking out only the "firstfruits" of those to be saved. And they are being tried and tested to qualify for positions as kings and priests in the Kingdom, to effect, then, the real salvation of the world.

When Christ Returns

Then it is that God shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people—Israel (Isa. 11:11).

Then it is that "... the Lord will come with fire, and ... by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh. ... And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape [these plagues] of them unto the nations [Gentiles] ... *that have not heard* my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles" (Isa. 66:15-16, 19).

Then it is that "living waters shall go out from Jerusalem," and the Gentile nations that have not heard previously "shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to *keep the feast of tabernacles"!* (Zech. 14:16.)

Then it is that many nations "shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain [nation] of the Lord ... and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares ... neither shall they learn war any more. ... *In that day,* saith the Lord ... the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever" (Micah 4:2-3, 6-7). This does not apply to God's Church

now—but to the glorious time of the Kingdom, after Christ returns. What a wonderful plan of redemption!

Adam sinned. All have sinned. From Adam to now we behold a chronicle of man without God—of human suffering and failure. And thus God, in His great wisdom, has permitted men to prove to themselves what sinners they are—how helpless they are, of themselves!

And finally we shall have to learn the lesson that it is only when God Himself undertakes to save men—by sending Jesus to rule with a rod of iron—that the world can really be saved! And so, those now being saved are a firstfruits of salvation, and will have the very great honor of being Christ's assistants in that wonderful Kingdom work of redemption!

That is God's true plan of redemption, as taught from Genesis to Revelation! And how contrary to the popular teaching! But it is the plan, nevertheless, pictured in God's annual holy days. And had the churches continued to keep these holy days, they would never have lost sight of this plan, and come under the deception of false religionists!

Pentecost Observed by New Testament Church of God

Just as we found the true Church of God continuing to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover, so they continued to observe Pentecost. Read it: I Corinthians 16:8; Acts 20:16.

Had they not been assembled in a holy convocation on the first Pentecost after everything that was abolished had been done away, we never could have read in our Bibles the sublime record of the second chapter of Acts.

Now a "holy convocation" means a holy assembly of the Church, convoked under absolute authority. Look up the word "convocation" in the dictionary. It is an assembly where everyone is commanded, under authority, to be present. The Sabbath is a weekly holy convocation. We are commanded, therefore, to assemble ourselves together. Each of these annual days is an holy convocation. The early Church obeyed. Do we?

FEAST OF TRUMPETS AND DAY OF ATONEMENT

AND THE Lord spake . . . saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, *a memorial* [not a shadow] of blowing of trumpets, an HOLY CONVOCATION. Ye shall do no servile work therein . . ." (Lev. 23:23-25).

Here is pictured to us that next blessed event in God's redemptive plan, when Christ shall COME again, in clouds, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God (I Thes. 4:14-17). It shall be "at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall [all] be changed" (I Cor. 15:52).

Unless Christ returns to resurrect the dead, we would never gain eternal life—if there is no resurrection "then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (I Cor. 15:18).

Christ directly intervenes in world affairs at the seventh or the last trump (Rev. 11:15-19). A trumpet is a symbol of war. He comes in a time of worldwide war—when the nations are angry! As soon as the work of gathering in the firstfruits (pictured by Pentecost) is completed at the end of this present age, then Christ will begin to set up again the tabernacle of David (Acts 15:16)—to set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people (Isa. 11:11)—to search out and to find His lost sheep that the

ministers of the churches have failed to search out and save during this period (Ezek. 34:1-14).

Notice exactly when this takes place! "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they [Israel] shall come which were ready to perish . . . and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem" (Isa. 27:13).

When will Israel be regathered? At the sound of the trump—at the Second Coming of Christ. Because the churches have forgotten the Festival of Trumpets, many think that the return of a part of the Jews to the Holy Land and the setting up of a nation called Israel now is the fulfillment of this prophecy!

Christ's direct intervention in world affairs will be the next event in the plan of redemption.

And perhaps the glorious Second Coming shall occur, in whatever year it may be, on this very day of the Feast of Trumpets—who knows? While we cannot say for certain, yet cannot we see this possibility? The crucifixion was upon the Passover day—the very day! The Holy Spirit came, beginning the selecting of the firstfruits of salvation, on the very day of Pentecost. Had not those 120 disciples been observing this annual Sabbath—had they not been assembled there in holy convocation—could they have received that blessing of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit? Repeatedly Jesus warned us to watch, regarding His Second Coming! Could it be possible that, unless we are observing the Feast of Trumpets, as the first-century Church of God was observing Pentecost, that we shall not be ready, or caught up to meet Him? We do not—we cannot, of course say; but we do ask the question. Is it not possible? Let us humbly and willingly yield to walk obediently in all the light.

The Festival of Trumpets is a day of rejoicing—and, as the weekly Sabbath, holy unto the Lord (Neh. 8:2, 9-12).

Day of Atonement, or the Fast

Next, let us read Leviticus 23:26, 27, 31-32: "And the LORD spake . . . saying, Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls

[fast]. . . . Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute *for ever* throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a *sabbath* of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, *from even unto even,* shall ye celebrate *your sabbath.*" Wonderful mystery! At-one-ment with God! Man at last made one with his Maker!

Again, in the 16th chapter of Leviticus, verses 29 and 31, where the symbolism of the Day of Atonement is explained, we find it instituted a holy Sabbath to be kept forever: "And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you. . . . It shall be a *sabbath of rest* unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever."

Notice, too, in Leviticus 23:32, the expression "from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath." Every Sabbath keeper quotes this passage to show that the Sabbath begins at sunset. If we believe that, then why not keep the Sabbath that this very text is speaking of—the high Sabbath of the Day of Atonement, instituted forever? Are we consistent, when we continually quote this text to show when to begin the Sabbath, and then refuse to keep the very Sabbath referred to?

Meaning Pictured by Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement pictures a wonderful and great event, to take place after the Second Coming of Christ, which the world is in total ignorance of because it has failed to see the true significance of these annual Sabbaths holy unto the Lord. It has failed to keep them as a constant reminder of God's plan of redemption!

The symbolism is all expressed in the account of the events of the Day of Atonement, as carried out before the crucifixion, in the 16th chapter of Leviticus.

Verse 5—"And he [Aaron, or the high priest] shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering. . . ."

Verse 6—The high priest offered a sin offering for HIMSELF and his house.

Verses 7 and 8—"And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; the one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat" (margin, Hebrew, *Azazel*).

Now because this has not been understood—because there are many different views and opinions and ideas and explanations of this, we here pause sufficiently to go into this in some detail. Let us, therefore, regardless of our own former convictions, study with open minds, without prejudice, proving all things. We want truth!

The key to the whole explanation lies in a correct understanding of the meaning of *Azazel.* This word does not occur elsewhere in the Old Testament. The *Comprehensive Commentary* has: "Spencer, after the oldest opinions of the Hebrews and Christians, thinks Azazel is the name of the Devil, and so Rosen. . . . The word scapegoat signifies the goat *which went away."* The *One Volume Commentary* says: "The word 'scapegoat' in the A.V. is not a translation." It is merely an *interpretation* of the supposed meaning by the translators.

True, the English word "scapegoat" signifies "one who bears blame or guilt for others." But "scapegoat" is an English word, and is not a translation of the Hebrew word *Azazel.* The word "scapegoat," and the meaning attached to this English word, is not a translation of the Hebrew word *Azazel,* and therefore it is not the word inspired originally. Continues the *One Volume Commentary:* "Azazel is understood to be the name of one of those malignant demons."

Types of Christ and Satan

These two goats were, of course, types. Notice, it was necessary to be decided by lot, which one was qualified to represent Christ, and which Azazel. Some say BOTH were qualified. The scripture does not say this. Let us not assume it. Now a "lot" is a solemn appeal to God to decide a doubtful matter. It is a sacred religious ceremony. It included a supernatural act of God. That is why lotteries and gambling are of the devil—an actual profaning of a holy service appealing to God.

Notice, men were unable to decide which goat was qualified to represent Christ. This involved an appeal to God to decide! "One lot for the Lord, and the other lot for Azazel." Now one lot was for the Lord—this goat typified Christ—but the other lot was not for the Lord, did not typify Christ, but Azazel—Satan! These words most naturally suggest that Azazel is the name of a person, here contrasted to the Eternal! Notice the contrast—one for the Lord, the other for Azazel.

Now the goat which God selected—through lot, to represent Christ—was slain, as Christ, its antitype was slain. But the other goat selected by God to represent Azazel was not slain, but was driven, alive, into an uninhabited wilderness. It was not a resurrected goat, symbolizing the resurrected Christ, for it never died. The uninhabited wilderness, to which this goat was driven, cannot, as we shall show, represent heaven, where Christ went. Heaven is neither uninhabited, nor a wilderness.

After God designated which goat represented Christ and which Azazel, the high priest (verse 11) killed the bullock for a sin offering for himself, then took the burning coals of fire and the sweet incense into the Holy of Holies, also sprinkling the blood of the bullock before the mercy seat, typical of the throne of God, covering the tables of testimony (the law). This the high priest was required to do in order to purify himself to officiate, and to represent Christ as High Priest. In the antitype, this was not done, for Christ, our High Priest, had no need of this purification as the typical substitutionary priests did.

Now the Levitical high priest was ready to go out and officiate.

Next, the goat which God selected by lot to represent Christ, as the sin offering of the people, was killed. Thus the sins of the people were borne by the goat, even as Christ, finally, once for all, bore our sins on the cross. But Christ rose again from the dead, and ascended to the throne of God in heaven.

Now, who, or what, from this point on in the Levitical ceremony, typified the resurrected Christ, who went to heaven? Some say the goat representing Azazel. Let us see.

The risen Christ, now at the right hand of the throne of

God in heaven (I Peter 3:22), is called—what? Our High Priest! What was the earthly type of God's throne? The uninhabited wilderness? No! That is where the live goat went!

The earthly type of God's throne was the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. After Christ died, He went to the heavenly mercy seat interceding for us, as our High Priest. ". . . Entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 6:19-20).

Now, again, who, or what, in the Levitical ceremony of the Day of Atonement, typified the risen Christ, our High Priest, who went within the veil to God's throne in heaven? The one goat had been slain. It represented the slain Christ. It can no longer represent the risen Christ. The slain Christ was not our High Priest, because the Levitical priesthood, with its high priest, did not end until Christ rose from the dead and ascended to heaven as a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. But the risen Christ was High Priest. Now WHO took this part in the Levitical ceremonies, temporarily re-enacted year by year, on this eternal Holy Day? Why, so obviously a child could see, it was the Levitical high priest, not the goat representing Azazel!

The High Priest—Type of Christ

As soon as the slain goat was dead, *who* went within the veil, presenting the blood of this goat before the typical throne of God?

Leviticus 16:15-16—"Then shall he [the high priest] kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and [now the high priest himself typifying the work of the risen Christ] bring his blood within the veil . . . and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat: and he shall make an atonement for the holy place. . . ."

And so it was the high priest taking blood within the veil, to the mercy seat, that typified the risen Christ figuratively taking HIS blood, once for all, within the veil to the very throne of God in heaven, there to intercede for us as High Priest. Surely this is so plain a child can see.

The slain goat represented the crucified Jesus. The high

priest, by taking the blood of this slain goat into the veil to the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, a type of God's throne, represented and did the work of the risen Christ, who ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high, there interceding as our High Priest. Can we honestly continue to teach that the goat representing Azazel represented the work of the risen Christ? Did this live goat take the blood of Christ within the veil, to the mercy seat?

The high priest going within the veil, into the Holy of Holies, symbolized Christ's return to heaven. The work he did while in the Holy of Holies symbolized Christ's work these 1900 years interceding for us, presenting His shed blood before the mercy seat in heaven. Now, coming back out, symbolizing Christ's return to earth, what did the high priest do?

"And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, *he shall bring the live goat:* and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, *putting them upon the head of the goat,* and *shall send him away* by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him [Fenton: *shall carry upon itself*] all their iniquities unto a *land not inhabited:* and he shall let go the goat *in the wilderness.* And Aaron shall . . . wash his flesh with water. . . . And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat [Azazel] shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp" (Lev. 16:20-24, 26).

The Azazel Goat Not Our Sin-Bearer

Let us get this straight!

Is there justice with God? Is not God a God of justice, as well as of compassion and mercy? Who is the real author of our sins? The devil is the author of them, even as Christ is the author of our salvation. Jesus took our guilt—our blame—our sins—upon Himself as an innocent substitutionary sacrifice. He was an innocent victim. He loved us, and was willing to die for us. Our guilt—our sins, were borne by Him, and Him alone—and God forgives them when we

repent and accept His sacrifice. And yet, is this, if we stop there, full justice?

The real cause—the actual author of those sins—was Satan the devil. Is it justice for Christ to bear guilt that is not His, while the devil goes off scot-free? Do you not suppose GOD's great plan will finally work full justice by placing that original blame and guilt right where it belongs?

Now mark carefully this distinction. Christ bore our guilt. For we have been guilty, even though the devil was the original cause of it all. But justice certainly demands that God place right back on the head of the devil his guilt—not our guilt, but his own guilt—for leading us into sin. We were guilty, too—and our guilt Christ bore—yet all our sins belong right back on the devil as his own guilt!

Now notice another point. The Azazel goat carries away the sins of all the people already forgiven. These sins already were fully paid for by Christ's substitute sacrifice, symbolized by the killing of the innocent goat before those same sins were finally laid on the live goat. They had been previously paid for by the death of the slain goat.

The devil is the real author of all sin. Can we, then, be finally made at one with God, as long as this instigator of sin is with us? Can we not see he must first be driven away? And there would not be justice with God unless his own guilt in our sins were placed right back on his head? Is it justice for Christ to bear the devil's guilt, as well as our own guilt, for our sins? Christ has carried our sins, but must He continue to carry them? Should they not be removed entirely from us, and from the presence even of God?

Thus the killing and sprinkling of blood of the first goat visibly set forth the means of reconciliation with God, through the substituted sacrifice of an innocent victim. So finally the sending away of the second goat, laden with those sins, the expiation of which had been signified by the first goat, no less vividly sets forth the effect of that sacrifice, in complete removal of those expiated sins from the presence of God!

Satan the Accuser

Satan is the accuser of the brethren. His power over men is founded on sin. When all these sins, of which he is the author,

are laid back on him, after being removed from us by Christ, then Satan shall have lost his claim on us. And no longer can he accuse us!

Thus, finally, as the acceptance of the blood of the first goat (Christ) symbolized complete propitiation, and pardon of Israel's sins, so the sending of Azazel bearing away those expiated sins symbolizes the complete removal of all sins—deliverance by the atonement from the power of the adversary.

The sacrifice of the first innocent victim was the means of reconciliation with God, but not yet complete justice.

The driving away of the second live goat shows the final atonement, by placing the sins on their author where they belong, and the complete removal of the sins and their author from the presence of God and His people—and thus the complete deliverance of the people from the power of Satan.

Webster says to atone means to set at one. To join in one—to form by uniting. We shall not be completely joined in one, and united with God, until this is done.

Before leaving this, notice, too, that after laying both his hands on the live goat, Azazel, Aaron had to wash and cleanse himself before coming in contact with the people. So, too, the "fit man" also had to wash his clothes and bathe himself after coming in contact with the Azazel goat, before he came into the presence of the people. The symbolism is certainly that of having come in contact with the devil!

Notice, now, this act of putting these already expiated and forgiven sins on the head of this live goat does not take place until after the high priest returns from the Holy of Holies within the veil—so this typified an act to take place after the Second Coming of Christ to this earth!

But if the live goat represented the resurrected Christ, then the sins Christ bore on the cross were placed by another, typified by the high priest, back on Christ, after His resurrection. Would this make sense? Is the theory of the Azazel goat being Christ consistent? No, but the plain simple meaning does fit at every turn, and IS consistent. The first goat represented the innocent Jesus who died for our sins—the high priest represented the risen Christ going within the veil to the mercy seat, or throne of God in heaven,

for over 1900 years—and the high priest returning to place the sins finally upon the head of the live goat represented the return of Christ who will place the sins He bore on their author, the devil, and who will send him away alive into a desolate uninhabited wilderness—the "bottomless pit" or abyss of Revelation 20:3.

In the 19th chapter of Revelation, we have the prophecy of the Second Coming of Christ. At the beginning of the 20th chapter, what is to happen?

Exactly what the 16th chapter of Leviticus shows. The devil is sent away—the symbol here used is the "bottomless pit" symbol of an uninhabited desolate wilderness (Rev. 18:2)—and he is sent there by a FIT man—an ANGEL from heaven. Now the devil is not killed. He does not die. He is still alive a thousand years later—after the Millennium (Rev. 20:7).

Now a few points that will come to mind. Both goats were "presented before the Lord." Can Satan be presented before the Lord? Job 1:6 and 2:1 says he has presented himself before the Lord. Note, too, Azazel was driven away from the Holy of Holies, a symbol of God's presence.

And so the annual Day of Atonement was instituted forever to keep continually before God's children and His Church the plan of redemption, to occur after the Second Coming of Christ.

And we find this annual holy day recognized in the New Testament. In Acts 27:9, it is recorded that Paul was on his perilous sea voyage to Rome, "when sailing was now dangerous, *because the fast was now already past*. . . ." See the margin in your Bible. The fast refers to the Day of Atonement—the 10th day of the seventh month. Now this day could not then have been past on that particular year unless that day was still in full effect and force and existence. Otherwise the Holy Spirit surely could never have inspired those words! Surely this strongly indicates that this day was still in existence and being recognized thus by the Holy Spirit.

FEAST OF TABERNACLES AND LAST GREAT DAY

NOW WE come to the festival of Tabernacles—or Feast of Booths—the sixth festival. Let us notice the instruction concerning this occasion:

"Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine. And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter. . . . Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord shall choose: because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice . . . and they shall not appear before the Lord empty: every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee" (Deut. 16:13-17).

Here is the Festival of Tabernacles, to be kept for seven days, beginning the 15th day of the seventh month of God's sacred calendar. Notice Leviticus 23:33-35: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord. On the first day shall be an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work therein."

On the first of these days is a holy convocation—a commanded assembly. No work is to be done. ". . . And ye shall *rejoice* before the Lord your God seven days. . . . It shall

be a statute *for ever* in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month" (Lev. 23:40-41).

Notice that it is commanded forever.

Here are pictured those final culminating events in God's great plan: after Christ has died for our sins to redeem mankind—after He has sent us the Holy Spirit and picked out a people for His Name to become kings and priests through the thousand years—after His glorious Second Coming—after He has finally restored the redeemed by placing all the sins upon the head of Satan, their real author, and separating both him and the sins from the presence of God and His people, thus finally perfecting the at-one-ment, making us finally joined in one—then we are ready for that final series of events, the commencement of the "Marriage of the Lamb," the actual making of the New Covenant, the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth and the reaping of the great harvest of souls for a thousand years.

This festival is the picture of the Millennium!

Pictures the Millennium

To portray His plan, God took the yearly material harvest seasons in ancient Israel as the picture of the spiritual harvest of souls. In the Holy Land there are two annual harvests. The first is the spring grain harvest. Second comes the main harvest.

Notice that the Festival of Tabernacles is to be held "at the year's end" (Ex. 34:22). In this verse the Festival of Tabernacles or Booths is specifically called the "feast of ingathering." The harvest year ended at the beginning of autumn. Just as Pentecost pictures the early harvest—this church age, so the Festival of Ingatherings or Tabernacles pictures the fall harvest—the great harvest of souls in the Millennium!

Today is not the only day of salvation. Today is *a* day of salvation. Isaiah said so: chapter 49, verse 8. In fact, the original Greek words of Paul in II Corinthians 6:2 should be translated "*a* day of salvation," not "*the* day of salvation."

Turn to the book of Zechariah to understand this more thoroughly. In the 12th and 13th chapters we have a picture of Christ returning and the reconciliation of the world com-

mencing. Here the meaning of the Festivals of Trumpets and Atonement is made plain.

Next, notice the 14th chapter. The time is the Millennium. "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one . . . there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited" (verses 9, 11). It is the time when "living waters"—salvation, the Holy Spirit—"shall go out from Jerusalem" (verse 8). The "waters" are literal as well as figurative. God often pictures His spiritual plan by material events.

In that day, when the earth is safely inhabited, when the Holy Spirit is granted to all mortal flesh, what happens? "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up *from year to year* to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, *and to keep the feast of tabernacles*" (verse 16).

Gentiles Forced to Keep the Feast of Tabernacles

Notice this 16th verse of Zechariah 14. After Christ returns, the nations—mortal Gentiles who have not yet received salvation—will come to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles! How could they keep a festival that was abolished at the cross? They could keep it only if it were commanded forever.

And what will happen if they refuse to obey God? "And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain" (verse 17). Strong words these!

The nations will be forced to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, from year to year, when Christ is ruling with a rod of iron!

And if the nations still won't obey? ". . . there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen"—there are still heathen nations just beginning to learn the way of salvation—"that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment . . . of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles" (verses 18-19).

To receive salvation even the Gentiles will have to keep this festival. Of course, it is commanded forever!

Now we customarily quote Isaiah 66:23, showing that the Sabbath will be kept in the Millennium, as proof we must keep it now. Will we, then, when we read Zechariah 14:16, showing that the Feast of Tabernacles will be kept in the Millennium, be consistent by keeping it today?

Can we qualify as a son of God—a king and priest—ruling with Christ on His throne, assisting Christ at that time, if we now refuse to keep these festivals? Notice that Christ kept the Feast of Tabernacles. The Apostle John devoted an entire chapter of his gospel—the seventh chapter—to describe what Jesus said and did during the Feast of Tabernacles in the last year of His ministry.

Why Called the Feast of Tabernacles

During the Millennium, the Kingdom of God into which we may be born will rule the nations which are composed of mortal men begotten by the Spirit of God. The billions of mortal men alive during the Millennium will still be heirs to the Kingdom of God. They will not yet have inherited it as long as they remain mortal flesh, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:50). "Ye must be born again"—"of the Spirit"—to inherit the Kingdom, said Jesus.

Remember that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were merely heirs when they dwelled on earth (Heb. 11:9). While heirs they dwelled in tabernacles or booths, sojourning in the land of promise. Booths or temporary dwellings pictured that they were not yet inheritors. Thus we read of the Feast of Tabernacles that "ye shall dwell in booths seven days . . . that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. 23:42-43). Israel dwelled in booths in the wilderness before they entered the promised land. Those booths pictured that they were only heirs. Even during the Millennium, when the Kingdom of God is ruling over mortal nations, the people will be only *heirs* to the Kingdom. They must overcome and grow in knowledge and wisdom to inherit the promises.

What a marvelous picture. God says of Ephraim (a type of all Israel) that they will "dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast" (Hosea 12:9). Israel, in the wilderness, was a type of all people who must go through trials and tribulations to inherit the promises. They were wanderers, waiting to inherit the promises of salvation.

The contention, held by some sects, that mortal human beings in the Millennium will remain flesh and blood forever is plainly denied by the Feast of Tabernacles, for the festival itself points toward an eternal inheritance.

Besides, after Jesus gathers the Church to Himself, and after He is seated on His throne where we will be ruling with Him, He will gather the nations before Him and say: "*Inherit* the Kingdom" (Matt. 25:34).

Yet Another Festival!

Did you notice that the Feast of Tabernacles is only the sixth festival? There is yet another—the seventh!

The Feast of Tabernacles is, strictly speaking, seven days long—to picture the entire Millennium. Seven is God's number of completeness. Therefore, there must also be seven festivals. Let us notice where it is mentioned: "The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord . . . on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you . . . it is a [day of] solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein' (Lev. 23:34, 36).

This eighth day, technically a separate feast, is called "the *last day,* that *great day* of the feast" (John 7:37).

What does this final holy day represent?

Notice what Jesus preached about on that day: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink . . . out of his belly [innermost being] shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive . . .)" (John 7:37-39).

This was Jesus' sermon giving the meaning of the last great day!

Now turn to Revelation 20. After the Millennium, what happens? A resurrection! The dead stand before God. This couldn't include true Christians today, as they will appear

before the judgment seat when Christ returns. It couldn't refer to those converted during the Millennium. They have already inherited the Kingdom during the Millennium, after living out a normal life-span. Those in this resurrection must be those who died in ignorance in past ages! They are not brought to life until after the Millennium (Rev. 20:5).

Pictures the Day of Judgment

This is that judgment day mentioned in Matthew 10:15. It is a time when Gentiles who died in ignorance will be given an opportunity to receive salvation. Ezekiel 16:53-55 makes this very plain. Even those in Israel who died in their sins will be given their *first* opportunity to understand the truth of God and His way (Ezek. 37). The prophet wrote that God would pour out His Spirit on those resurrected (verse 14). This is precisely the salvation that Jesus mentioned in His sermon on that great day of the feast in the autumn of A.D. 30.

This eighth day, which immediately follows the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, pictures the completion of the plan of redemption. It is just prior to the new heaven and the new earth. All—parents and children, young and old—will be resurrected.

Notice that the "book of life"—typifying salvation—is opened (Rev. 20:12). Revelation presents the final view of the "judgment day" as the present material heaven and earth are perishing—and the faithful are receiving their eternal reward at the throne of Christ. The wicked—those who disobey—are seen perishing in the lake of fire!

What a marvelous plan! All will have an equal opportunity.

And finally, notice in Leviticus 23:37-38. After describing these annual holy days, it says: "These are the feasts of *the Lord,* which ye shall proclaim to be *holy convocations . . . beside the sabbaths of the Lord.*" We are, then, to keep these *besides* the Sabbath of the Lord.

SUNDAY is the weekly rest day of this modern churchianity, but the Sabbath is the day of the LORD.

Christmas, New Year's, Easter, and a host of others are the holidays that have come directly from paganism, but these seven annual holy days are the holy days of God! Let us

forsake the pagan holidays of this world, and observe the true holy days of God. (See calendrical dates on pages 52-53.)

Festival Information

Of course, many of you reading this booklet may not know of any other people keeping God's holy days. In fact, you may be wondering if there is any such group. There is a way to find out the answers to these questions if you are interested.

The Worldwide Church of God has dedicated, fully instructed and trained, ordained ministers in all parts of the United States and Canada and in many other parts of the world. They are available to call on you, visit in your home, answer your questions and explain the Bible to you. (Please turn page for additional details.)

Of course, no one will call on you, unless you request it. But, if you of your own volition want to know more about God's festivals and where to keep them, write to us immediately. We will be happy to arrange a private appointment. □

ADDITIONAL READING

Don't forget to send for the booklets *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?* and *Where Is the True Church?* They are sent free as a service in the public interest.

If You'd Like to Know More

Many hundreds have written asking if we have representatives in their local areas to counsel with them personally and to answer their questions.

The answer is yes, we do.

The Worldwide Church of God stations personal representatives (most are ordained ministers) in the United States and many other areas of the world. These local ministers will visit you, if invited, directly in your own home.

So if you have spiritual matters to discuss or questions to ask about biblical topics such as marriage, family, repentance, baptism, etc., please feel free to write us and request a private appointment. Worldwide mailing addresses are as follows:

- United States: P.O. Box 111, Pasadena, California 91123. (Or simply dial this toll-free number in the *continental* U.S.: 1-800-423-4444. Readers in Alaska may call 1-818-304-6111 collect.)
- United Kingdom, rest of Europe and Middle East: P.O. Box 111, Borehamwood, Herts., England WD6 1LU. (Or dial this number in the U.K.: Radlett 01-953-1633.)
- Australia: G.P.O. Box 345, Sydney, NSW 2001. (Or dial this number: 075-35-4233—reverse the charges.)
- Canada: P.O. Box 44, Station A, Vancouver, B.C. V6C 2M2. (Or dial this toll-free number: 1-800-663-2345.)
- South Africa: P.O. Box 5644, Cape Town 8000. (Or dial this number: 021-452202.)

Other areas of the world should check at the end of this booklet for the address of our office nearest you.

The Annual Feast Days of God

Roman Year	First Day of Sacred Year	*Passover	Days of Unleavened Bread
	Nisan (or Abib 1)	Nisan 14	Nisan 15-21
1985	March 23	April 5	April 6-12
1986	April 10	April 23	April 24-30
1987	March 31	April 13	April 14-20
1988	March 19	April 1	April 2-8
1989	April 6	April 19	April 20-26
1990	March 27	April 9	April 10-16
1991	March 16	March 29	March 30-Apr
1992	April 4	April 17	April 18-24

*Observed the previous evening after sunset. For example, in 1985 the Passover would be observed the evening of April 4.

**Pentecost (a Greek word signifying "fiftieth") is counted from the day on which the wave sheaf was offered during the Days of Unleavened Bread. It is always on a Sunday during Sivan, the 3rd month.

**Pentecost	Feast of Trumpets	Day of Atonement	Feast of Tabernacles	The Last Great Day
Sivan	Tishri 1	Tishri 10	Tishri 15-21	Tishri 22
May 26	Sept. 16	Sept. 25	Sept. 30-Oct. 6	Oct. 7
June 15	Oct. 4	Oct. 13	Oct. 18-24	Oct. 25
June 7	Sept. 24	Oct. 3	Oct. 8-14	Oct. 15
May 22	Sept. 12	Sept. 21	Sept. 26-Oct. 2	Oct. 3
June 11	Sept. 30	Oct. 9	Oct. 14-20	Oct. 21
June 3	Sept 20	Sept. 29	Oct. 4-10	Oct. 11
May 19	Sept 9	Sept. 18	Sept. 23-29	Sept. 30
June 7	Sept. 28	Oct. 7	Oct. 12-18	Oct. 19

Why Do Over 20 Million People Read This Magazine?

YES: A BRIGHTER TOMORROW IS COMING!

Sooner than many expect, a world of peace and happiness will be right here—on planet Earth.

FOR 50 YEARS, on radio and television, a voice has rung out, "Well greetings, friends around the world. This is Herbert W. Armstrong bringing you the GOOD NEWS of the WORLD TOMORROW!"

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The ... What's that?

... of the ... een good ... earthquakes, ...es, tornados, po...al, coups and rebel... drought and hunger have ...inated the headlines.

Yet for 50 years Mr. Armstrong and the *Plain Truth* magazine have constantly reported there is GOOD NEWS.

The good news is that humanity at long last will be shown the way to peace, prosperity and happiness. But how?

Too Good to Be True?

Many simply cannot imagine a world without strife, upset weather, war.

But that's the world prophesied for tomorrow in the book we call the Bible.

Can you imagine a world where nations live at peace? Where not one dollar is budgeted for defense?



This is also prophesied. But for a few nations who will have to learn lessons the hard way, God will withhold such blessings till they learn how to live. Read Zechariah 14:17 as an example: "If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, they will have no rain" (NIV throughout, except where noted).

In the day of God's kingdom, upset weather or other less than desirable conditions will only be used to teach that following God's laws leads to all the good anyone could possibly want.

And can you imagine a world where people learn to respect the music, dance, art, looks, abilities and talents of each other?

Too good to be true?

No—that's what has been prophesied in the pages of the Bible for thousands of years. And that has been the message of this magazine for 50 years.

But How Can This Be?

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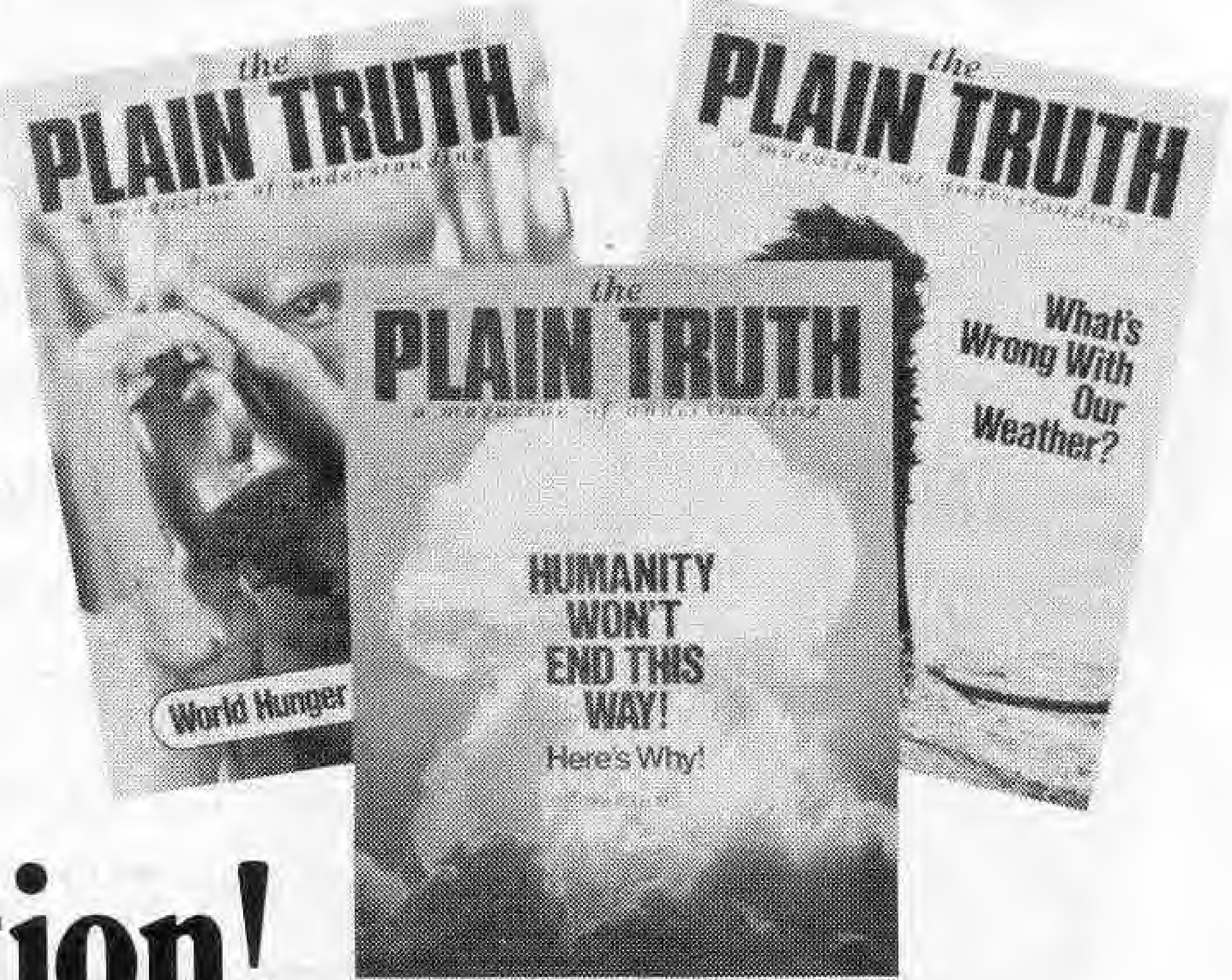
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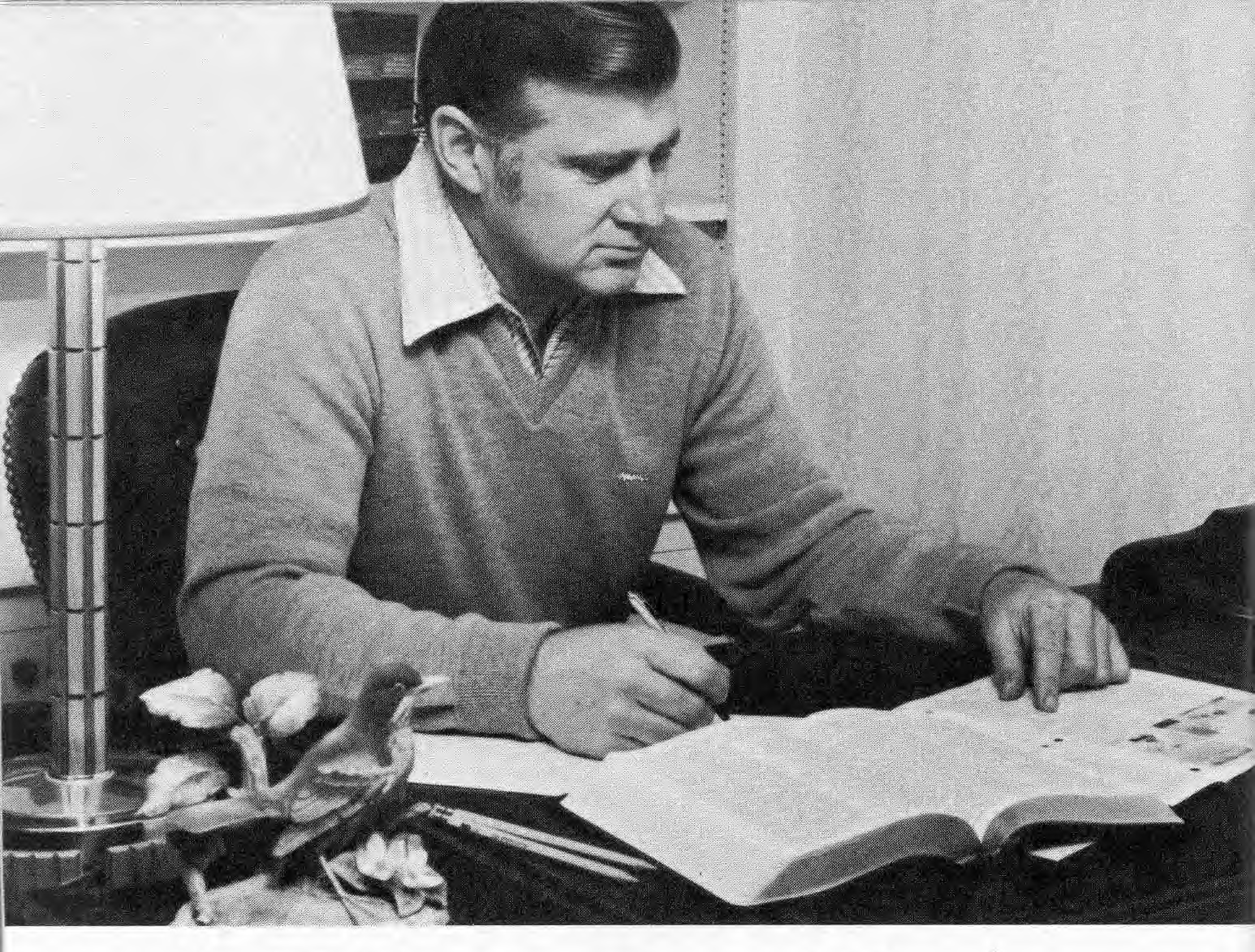
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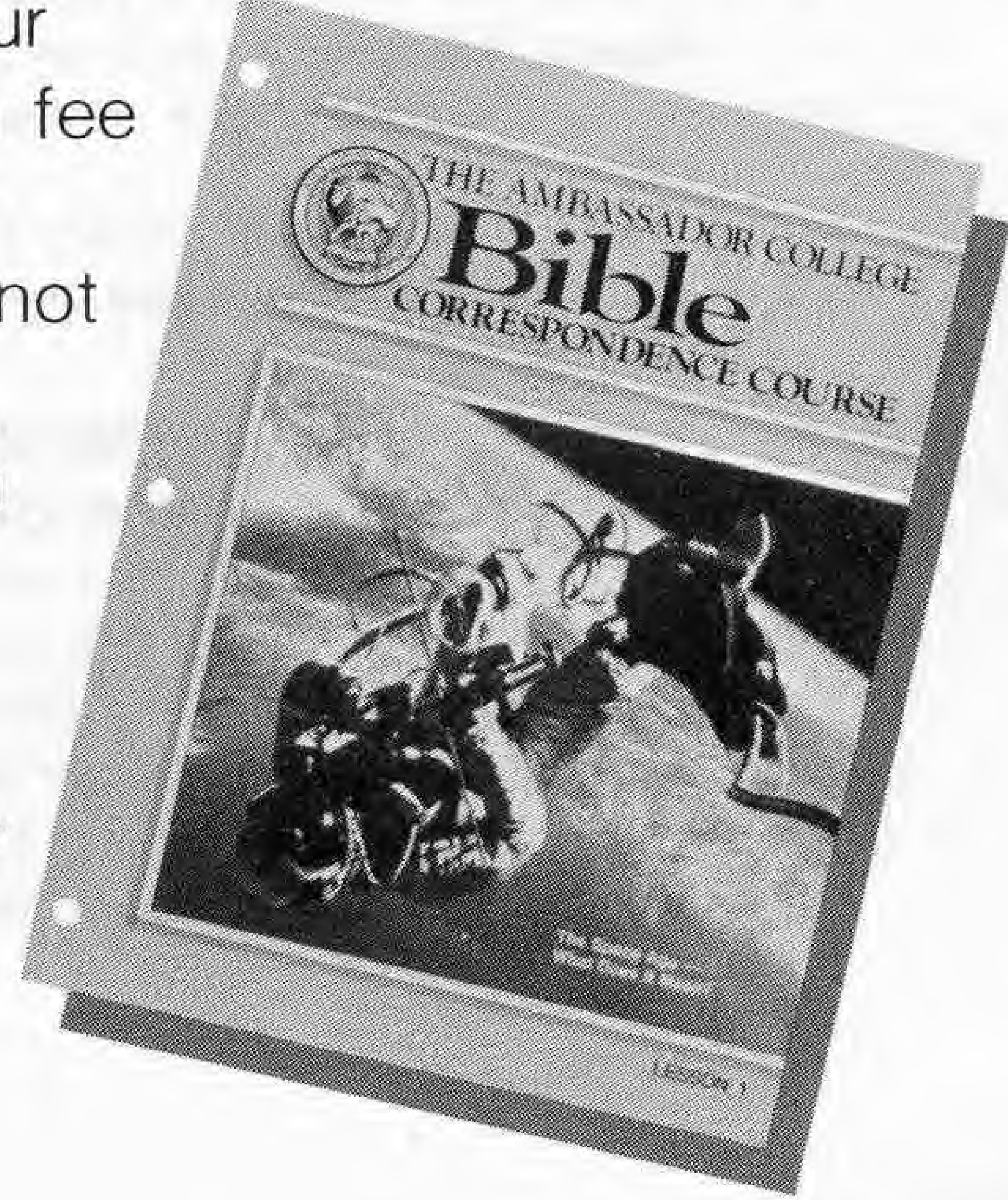
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The Date And Meaning Of Christmas

Endtime Issues No. 59

22 December 2000

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.
Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University

Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

During the past few weeks several people have asked me what I think about the religious celebration of Christmas in some Adventist churches. For example, a subscriber to our newsletter emailed me this message: "A puzzling question has been nagging me for a long time about the Christmas celebration in some Adventist churches. Could you explain to me why some Adventist churches celebrate Christmas while others do not? What is the full story behind this celebration? Can you enlighten us? I would appreciate if you could give me some insightful explanations about Christmas. It is such a beautiful and exciting holiday!"

An Adventist sister from the West coast just called me this morning to ask me how she could explain the Christmas celebrations going on in her own Adventist church to a family who were former members of the Church of God Seventh-day. This family has been attending the Adventist church regularly for several months and have received the complete series of Bible studies. They are almost ready to join the church through baptism, but now they are distressed over the Christmas decorations and celebration inside the Adventist church they are attending. They feel that the Adventist church is inconsistent by rejecting Sunday observance because of its origin as the pagan Day of the Sun, and yet accepting Christmas which began also as the pagan celebration of the birth of the Sun God.

"What can I say to this family?" the Adventist sister asked me. "We have studied with them for several months and they are ready to join our church. We hate to loose this lovely family over the question of Christmas." What would be your advice to this gracious and caring Adventist sister? I told her to put this family at ease by reassuring them that Christmas observance is not an Adventist fundamental belief. Most Adventist churches around the world do not decorate their sanctuary with Christmas trees and lights, nor do they have a special religious service on Christmas day.

Where I grew up in Rome, Italy, we never had a Christmas tree in our home or church. My father worked regularly on Christmas day. Our family regarded Christmas as a Catholic festival, similar to weekly Sunday, Easter Sunday, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on March 25, the Feast of Mary's Assumption of August 15, All Saints Day on November 1, etc. When I first came to the USA in 1960 as a seminary student at Andrews University, Christmas was primarily the Winter break. I do not recall much Christmas decorations and celebrations in the churches I visited during the four years I spent at the seminary from 1960 to 1964.

Things have changed gradually during the past 40 years. This became evident to me last Sabbath, December 16, when I entered Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University after being away on the Sabbath for several months. When I entered the sanctuary I was surprised to see the whole front-end profusely illuminated and decorated. It reminded me of the rich decorations usually found in Greek Orthodox churches.

Frankly, I am not inspired by the elaborate Christmas decorations and celebration, because as a historian I am reminded of their pagan origin. Jesus was born in a humble manger. There were no fanciful decorations to celebrate His birth. It would be more in keeping with the setting of His birth, to keep the decorations simple, designed to help people catch the spirit of Christ's birth.

It was the celebration of the birth of the Sun-god in ancient Rome that was accompanied by a profusion of lights and torches and the decoration of trees. To facilitate the acceptance of the Christian faith by the pagan masses, the Church of Rome found it expedient to make not only the Day of the Sun the weekly celebration of Christ's resurrection, but also the Birth Day of the Invincible Sun-God on December 15, the annual celebration of Christ's birth. This point will be expanded below.

The recognition of the pagan origin of Christmas, with all its lights, decoration, partying, and celebration, does not mean that it is wrong to take time to remember the birth of Jesus at this time of the year. After all it would be well for us to remember every day how Jesus was willing to leave His glorious heavenly position in order to be born into the human family as a helpless baby in order to become our Savior. No other story can grip the human heart as the story of the divine love manifested in being willing to enter into the limitation, suffering, agony and death of human flesh to become "Emmanuel," God with us. Reflecting on the mystery of the incarnation is a worthy daily spiritual exercise, that can be done also at Christmas time, known in the Christian world as the "Advent Season," that is, the season celebrating the First Advent of the Lord.

In a way the Advent Season offers a unique opportunity to Adventists to help Christians understand the ultimate meaning of Christmas, which is to be found in the fact that Jesus who came the first time as a helpless baby, will come back the second time as the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. What this means is the humble birth of Jesus in the human family is the prelude to His glorious return to dwell with His people throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. The ultimate celebration of the Advent Season awaits us at the glorious Second Coming of the Lord.

This important truth will be brought out in this Bible study where we shall see that the birth of Jesus was typologically represented in the ancient Feasts of Israel by the Feast of Booth, known also as the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast celebrated in ancient Israel not only the unsettled conditions of the wilderness sojourning when the people lived in booths or temporary shelters, but also the shelter or protection given by God to His people in the desert by dwelling among them through the cloud and fire.

The cloud and fire of God's presence that accompanied the Israelites day and night, functioned as a protecting booth over the people. This unique experience is seen in the New Testament as representing both the First Advent when Christ became flesh and tabernacled with us (John 1:14) and the Second Advent when the Lord Himself "will erect a booth over them with his presence" (Rev 7:15) and "will tabernacle with them" (Rev 21:3) throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. The first Advent of Jesus in *human flesh* to dwell among us for few years, point to the Second Advent in *divine glory* to dwell with the redeemed for eternity. We will explore this theme more fully shortly.

The many questions I have received about the celebration of Christmas, have caused me to change the topic of this newsletter. In the last newsletter (no. 58) I promised to continue our study of creeping compromise (political correctness) in Christianity by offering a brief historical survey of dress and adornments in some Christian denominations. I do have this study ready and I plan to use in a future newsletter. In view of the Christmas season and of the interest shown by many for a deeper understanding of the origin and meaning of Christmas, I decided to devote this newsletter to a fresh analysis of the date and meaning of Christmas. I warn you that you are in for some pleasant surprises. So, as the flight attendants put is, "seat down, relax, and enjoy our flight" into the date and meaning of Christmas

Before proceeding with our historical and theological investigation of Christmas, let me make a couple of announcements regarding forthcoming seminars and a special offer on the Sabbath issue of *RESTORE* magazine.

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the seminars for the month of January and February 2001. Feel free to contact me at (616) 471-2915 for a special seminar in your area during the coming year. I am in the process of finalizing my 2001 calendar of speaking engagements for and I still have few open weekends.

January 12-13: St. Croix, US Virgin Islands
Location: Central SDA Church
For information call Pastor Desmond James at (340) 778-8054

January 19-20: St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands
Location: Philadelphia SDA Church
For information call Pastor Ammaran Williams at (340) 775-1388

February 2-3 Sacramento Central SDA Church
Location: 6045 Camellia Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95819
For information call the church office at (916) 457-6511

February 9-10: Pendleton SDA Church
Location: 1401 SW Goodwin Place, Pendleton, OR 97801
For information call the church office at (541) 276-0882

February 16-17: Coeur d'Alene SDA Church
Location: 111 Locust Avenue, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814
For information call Pastor Lloyd Perrin at (509) 276-7386

March 2-3: Walla Walla City SDA Church
Location: 2133 Howard Street, Walla Walla, WA 99362
For information call church office at (509)525-9540

The date and seminars' location for the following months, will be posted in subsequent newsletters.

SPECIAL SABBATH ISSUE OF *RESTORE* MAGAZINE

Recently we offered to our subscribers the special issue of *RESTORE,* which contains seven enlightening articles on the Sabbath written by scholars of different persuasions. The response was great. We mailed out the 200 copies at hand in few days and several people have contacted us for additional copies. We have been able to secure another supply of this timely magazine for those who did not get copies before. Feel free to contact us to receive your copy.

RESTORE is a colorful (non-SDA) 44 pages magazine (8 1/2 by 11 inches) devoted to restore "the biblical Hebrew heritage to the Christian believer." The contributors to this magazine are all scholars of differing religious persuasions who share the common concern to recover the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. The Spring 2000 issue of *RESTORE* is devoted, as stated on the cover, to "restoring Shabbat: Time for God and the family." Three of the seven Sabbath articles are by Adventist scholars. My own article on "The Good News of the Sabbath" examines the three fundamental glad tidings which the Sabbath contains and proclaims, namely: perfect creation, complete redemption, and final restoration. This special Sabbath issue of RESTORE will enrich your understanding and experience of the Sabbath.

RESTORE regularly retails for $8.00 per copy, but I am able to mail you two copies of this SPECIAL SABBATH ISSUE for only $10.00, postage paid. To order your two copies for $10.00, postpaid, you can call us at (616) 471-2915 or email us the order form found at the end of this newsletter with your credit card information.

A SPECIAL "THANK YOU NOTE" TO ALL OUR SUBSCRIBERS

Most likely this is the last newsletter for the year 2000. This is a good time to pause for a moment to thank God for His providential leading in this project and to express my wholehearted gratitude to all of you who during this past year have supported my ministry through your messages, prayers and purchasing of my books.

When I started what I call "our cyberspace Bible Class," I would have never anticipated that over 12,000 people would subscribe to this ENDTIME ISSUES newsletter during this past year. The subscription list continues to grow at the rate of 20 to 30 new subscribers every day. Much of the credit goes to those of you who have shared these newsletters with your friends and invited them to subscribe. Words fail to express my appreciation for promoting this newsletter. Your efforts make it possible for me to share my ministry of research into biblical truths with a larger audience around the world. I would have never dreamed few years ago that the Lord would make it possible for me to share my research from the basement of my home in Berrien Springs, Michigan, with fellow believers and Christian friends around the world. Thank God for the miracle of instant communications.

My ministry of biblical research on vital endtime truths, is largely a venture of faith. I took an early retirement from Andrews University on July 1, 2000 at the age of 62, after 36 years of teaching (the last 26 years at Andrews), in order to devote myself more fully to research, writing, and lecturing. This means that for the next three years I will not receive any retirement benefits. Those of you who purchase my books make it possible for my ministry to continue. Thank you for your encouragement and support.

Few have complained that I promote my books in conjunction with this newsletter. Frankly, I would rather avoid the promotional aspect of this ministry. In fact, if a wealthy benefactor offers to adopt me as a scholar and to sponsor my research by paying my salary, I will immediately stop promoting my research and let other people do it for me. So far no benefactor has adopted me, but this could happen in the future. Solid biblical research is very expensive to produce because it is time consuming. Sponsors of such research are few and far between. My new research project on POPULAR HERESIES will cost me over $40,000.00 of forfeited salary alone, without counting the editorial and printing costs.

Unfortunately our publishing houses cannot afford to pay for expensive research projects. For example, I offered my manuscript on ***IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?*** to the REVIEW & HERALD. They were interested in this study, but they could not afford to refund me for the investment I made to produce it—which was over one year of forfeited salary. I am thankful for the willingness of the REVIEW & HERALD to buy 2000 copies as soon as the book came off the press. They bought the same quantity of each of my two latest books, ***THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE*** and ***THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC.*** These quantity purchases help me to meet my financial obligations toward the printer.

During the coming year it may become necessary for me to post this newsletter once a month, instead of every two weeks. This change may be necessary for two reasons. First, because I have accepted several overseas invitations which will take me away from my home computer and internet service for several weeks at a time. Second, preparing a newsletter takes me an average of two to three days of research and writings. The newsletter deadline, in addition to the incoming correspondence and travelling, leaves me with little time for researching and writing my new book on POPULAR HERESIES. To give priority to this major research project, I need to curtail some activities. By posting this newsletter only once a month, I will have more free time to devote to my new book.

What I have appreciated most during this past year is the many email messages received from all over the world from readers of the newsletters and books. Many of you have told me how the studies you have read have enriched your understanding and

experience of biblical truths. I want you to know that your messages of appreciation have meant a lot to me. They motivate me to continue and expand this ministry.

I would like to thank especially those of you who have bought quantities of *THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE* to donate to libraries and ministers of other faiths. As a result of your outreach efforts, many ministers have accepted the Sabbath. Some of them, like Pastor Allen Stanfield of the First Baptist Church (Southern Baptist) in Lucerne Valley, California, have moved their church services from Sunday to Saturday.

Even this afternoon a pastor of an independent community church in Virginia, called me to express his appreciation for the help received from reading some of my books given him by an Adventist. He kept me on the phone for half an hour and then emailed me a message requesting more books. It is gratifying to see how the Lord can use the printed page to bring conviction to the hearts of sincere truth seekers. Thank you for sharing these timely studies with the thought-leaders of your community. Please accept this simple note of thanks as a sincere expression of my gratitude for your support to my ministry of biblical research. May the Lord richly bless you with His wisdom and grace during this coming New Year.

While writing the above paragraph I received a phone call from Jerry Hall, a researcher and script writer for PAX TELEVISION network of 120 stations. They are responsible for such programs as "Touched by an Angel." During the hour long conversation, he told me that he had just finished reading some of my research on "Israel in Prophecy," and wants to interview me for their forthcoming TV series called "Encounters with the Unexplained." I accepted the invitation and a TV filming crew will come to our home for an on site filming. I refer to this incident simply to illustrate the power of the printed page.

WILLOW CREEK BAPTIZES BY SPRINKLING

Few days ago my daughter Loretta went with a visiting friend to visit the WILLOW CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH, which one of the largest churches, located in a suburb of Chicago. Both of them were surprised to see 200 persons baptized by sprinkling few drops of water over their heads. Later, during the Lord's Supper, people were offered slices of normal, fermented bread, instead of unleavened bread.

The explanation that was given is that it is more convenient to sprinkle and to offer regular bread, than to immerse people in a baptistery and to produce unleavened bread. Nobody will dispute the accuracy of their reasoning. The problem is that their reasoning betrays their philosophy which is to make Christianity a religion of convenience.

I am reporting this incident because several Adventist pastors have become so enamored with the successful WC church growth strategy, that they have resented my past negative remarks about WC. For them WC has become the role model of church growth for Adventist to follow.

Eventually I plan to post an in-depth analysis of WC after examining their publications and attending their programs. I feel that this investigation is urgently needed to evaluate the biblical basis of their church growth strategy, which is being adopted by an increasing number of Adventist pastors. Undoubtedly there are positive elements in the WC church growth strategy, but we must be sure to reject what would weaken our Adventist identity and mission.

An SDA pastor who attended the WC seminars, defended on SDANET the baptism by sprinkling done in December on the ground that the same people can be rebaptized by immersion in June in the lake on the premises of the church when the weather is warmer. He wrote: “the New Testament model for people that accept Christ is to get baptized right away. And I'd love to see our believers do the same to boldly, courageously step forward to be baptized as soon as possible after they have crossed the line of faith."

It amazes me to what extent some people will go to justify what WC does, even if their practice is a blatant violation of a biblical directive. With all the million of dollars WC has spent to build their auditorium, why have they not planned for a suitable baptistery? Why do people have to wait until June to be baptized or rebaptized by immersion? If WC exists to lead people to Christ by accepting Him through baptism, then a convenient baptistery should have been a priority in the design of their sanctuary. After all the lay out of the sanctuary reveal the theology of the worshippers.

The communion table, the pulpit, and the baptistery are three major components of a biblically oriented church, since they represent respectively the Lord's Supper, the preaching of the Word, and baptism—three important elements of our Christian worship.

It is disheartening for me to see how some people are so captivated by the numerical growth of Willow Creek, that they are willing to justify their unbiblical practices. My appeal to everyone is simple: Be like the Bereans by “examining the scriptures daily to see if the things were so” (Acts 17:11).

A LOOK AT THE DATE AND MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D., Retired Professor of Church History and Theology, Andrews University

The term “Christmas” is not found in the Bible. It derives from “Christ + Mass,” that is, from the Mass Catholics celebrate in honor of Christ’s birth on the night of December 25. Surprisingly, there is no mention in the New Testament of any the celebration of the anniversary of the birth of Christ. The Gospels’ accounts of Jesus’ birth are very brief, consisting only of few verses. By contrast, the accounts of what is known as “The Passion Week,” are lengthier, taking several chapters.

According to some estimates about one third of each Gospel is devoted to the Passion Week. It is evident that from the perspective of the Gospel writers, Christ’s death is more important for our salvation than His birth. The reason is that through His atoning death Christ secured our eternal salvation. Yet, Christians today tend to celebrate more the birth of Christ than His death. Perhaps the reason is that the birth of a Child Deliverer captures the imagination more than the death of a Savior. Society celebrates births, not deaths.

The Early Christians commemorated annually Christ’s death and resurrection at Passover, but we have no clear indications of an annual celebration of Christ’s birth. A major controversy erupted in the latter part of the second century over the Passover date, but the date of Christ’s birth did not become an issue until sometimes in the fourth century. At that time the dispute centered primarily over two dates for Christ’s birth: December 25 promoted by the Church of Rome and January 6, known as the *Epiphany,* observed b y the Eastern churches. “Both these days,” as Oscar Cullmann points out, “ were pagan festivals whose meaning provided a starting point for the specifically Christian conception of Christmas.”[1]

The Date of Christ’s Birth

It is a recognized fact that the adoption of the date of December 25th by the Western Church to commemorate Christ’s birth was influenced by the pagan celebration of the return of the sun after the winter solstice. More will be said later about the factors which influenced the adoption of this date. At this juncture it is important to note that the date of December 25 is totally devoid of Biblical meaning and is grossly inaccurate as far as the actual time of Christ’s birth.

If, as it is generally agreed, Christ’s ministry began when He was about thirty years of age (Luke 3:23) and lasted three and one-half years until His death at Passover (March/April), then by backtracking we arrive at the months of September/October, rather than to December 25.[2] Indirect support for a September/October dating of Christ’s birth is provided also by the fact that from November to February shepherds did not watch their flocks at night in the fields. They brought them into a protective corral called a “sheepfold.” Hence, December 25 is a most unlikely date for the birth of Christ.[3]

The most likely date of Christ’s birth in the latter part of September or the beginning of October. This date corresponds to the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, known also as the Feast of Booths. This feast was the last and most important pilgrimage of the year for the Jews. The overcrowded conditions at the time of Christ’s birth (“there was no place for them in the inn”—Luke 2:7) could be related not only to the census taken by the Romans at that time, but also to the many pilgrims that overrun the area especially during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Bethlehem is only four miles from Jerusalem. “The Romans,” notes Barney Kasdan, “were known to take their censuses according to the prevailing custom of the occupied territories. Hence, in the case of Israel, they would opt to have the people report to their provinces at a time that would be convenient for them. There is no apparent logic to calling the census in the middle of winter. The more logical time of taxation would be after the harvest, in the fall,”[4] when people had in their hands the revenue of their harvest.

Christ's Birth at the Time of the Feast of Tabernacles

Support for the belief that Christ was born at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, which occurs in late September or early October, is provided not only by chronological considerations of Christ's life mentioned above, but also by Messianic themes of the Feast of Tabernacles. Being the Feast that celebrated in one sense God's past tabernacling or dwelling among His people with the cloud by day and the flaming fire b y night, it served to foreshadow the day when the Son of God would become flesh and tabernacle among us (John 1:14).

It is important to remember that the seven annual Feasts of ancient Israel were designed to illustrate important events of salvation history. Those who are interested to study in greater depth how the Feasts of Israel reveal the unfolding of the Plan of Salvation, are encouraged to read my two volumes ***GOD'S FESTIVALS IN SCRIPTURE AND HISTORY.*** The first volume on ***THE SPRING FESTIVALS*** shows how Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost, point to the redemptive accomplishment of the first Advent, namely, Christ's Atoning death, His resurrection, ascension, inauguration of His heavenly ministry, and sending of the Holy Spirit.

The second volume on ***THE FALL FESTIVALS*** explain how the feasts of Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles point to the consummation of redemption, namely, the judgment, the final disposition of sin, and the Second Advent when Christ will come to gather his people and dwell with them in a restored world. Christ's First Coming to dwell among us in *human flesh*, serves as a prelude and guarantee of His Second Coming to dwell among the redeemed in *divine glory.* Both events, as we shall see, are typified b y the Feast of Tabernacles. Adventist eschatology is largely based on the typology of the Day of Atonement. ***THE FALL FESTIVALS*** is designed to broaden the typological basis of Adventist eschatology by showing the contribution of the other two Fall Feasts of Trumpets and Tabernacles to the unfolding of the consummation of redemption.

It is noteworthy that important events of the plan of salvation are consistently fulfilled on the Holy Days that prefigured them. Christ died on the Cross at the time when the Passover lamb was sacrificed (John 19:14). Christ arose at the time of the waving of the sheaf of barley as the first fruits of the coming harvest (1 Cor 15:23). The outpouring of the first fruits of God's Holy Spirit took place "when the day of Passover was fully come" (Acts 2:1, KJV). By the same token, Christ could well have been born at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, since the feast typifies God's First Coming to dwell among us through the incarnation of His Son and His Second Coming to dwell with His people (Rev 21:3) throughout eternity.

Growth in Meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles in the Old and New Testament grows in its meaning and function during the course of redemptive history. It began in the Old Testament as the Fall Feast of the Harvest Ingathering to express thanksgiving to God for the bounties of the fruit harvest. It became the Feast of Booths to commemorate the way God sheltered the Israelites with the "booth" of His presence during their sojourning in the wilderness. The celebration of the material blessings of the harvest and of the spiritual blessings of the divine sheltering during the exodus experience, served to foreshadow the blessings of the Messianic age when "there shall be neither cold nor frost . . . continuous day . . . living water, and . . . security (Zech 14:6, 7, 11). A highlight of the Messianic age would be the annual gathering of all the surviving nations "to keep the feast of booths" (Zech 14:16) in order to celebrate the establishment of God's universal Kingdom.

The rich typology of the Feast of Tabernacles finds in the New Testament both a Christological and an eschatological fulfillment. Christologically, the feast serves to reveal the Incarnation and mission of Christ. Jesus is God's ultimate tabernacle for in Him God tabernacled among men (John 1:14). He is the living water (John 7:37-38) typified by the water ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles. He is also the Light of the World (John 8:12)

typified by the night illumination of the Temple during the feast. Indeed, through Christ the blessings typified by the Feast of Tabernacles have become a reality for every believer.

Eschatologically, the Feast of Tabernacles serves to represent God's protection of His people through the trials and tribulation of this present life until they reach the heavenly Promised Land. There God will shelter the redeemed with the booth of His protective presence (Rev 7:15) and dwell with them for all eternity (Rev 21:3). As the ancient Israelites "rejoiced before the Lord" (Lev 23:40) at the Feast of Tabernacles by waving palm branches, singing, playing instruments, and feasting, so the countless multitude of the redeemed will rejoice before the throne of God, by waving palm branches (Rev 7:9), singing anthems of praise (Rev 7:10; 14:3; 15:2-4; 19:1-3), playing harps (Rev 14:2), and participating in the great marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9).

Ideal Time for the Birth of Jesus

The Feast of Tabernacles was the ideal time for the birth of Jesus because it was called "the season of our joy." The emphasis on the joyfulness of the feast is found in the instructions given in Deuteronomy 16:13-14: "You shall keep the feast of booths seven days, when you make your ingathering from your threshing floor and your wine press. *You shall rejoice in your feast,* you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns."

In contrast to the Feasts of Trumpets and Atonement which were a time of introspection and repentance, the Feast of Booths was a time of rejoicing. The festive atmosphere reflected the Israelites' thankfulness for both material and spiritual blessings. The explicit reason for rejoicing is given in Deuteronomy 16:15: "because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that *you will be altogether joyful*." It is not surprising that the rabbis called the feast "The Season of our Joy" (*Zeman Simhatenu*).

Ellen White notes that the reason for rejoicing was more than just the bounties of the harvest. She writes: "The feast was to be preeminently an occasion for rejoicing. It occurred just after the great Day of Atonement, when the assurance had been given that their iniquity should be remembered no more. At peace with God, they now came before Him to acknowledge His goodness and praise Him for His mercy. The labor of harvest being ended, and the toils of the new year not yet begun, the people were free from care, and could give themselves up to the sacred, joyous influences of the hour."[5]

The reason for the rejoicing was not only because of the material blessings of the harvest gathered in, but also because of the spiritual blessing of God's protection and abiding presence. The foliage of the booths during which the Israelites lived for seven days during the Feast, reminded them that God will protect the faithful remnant during the time of trouble by sheltering them with the cloud by day and the flaming fire by night: "It will be for a shade [*sakkath*] by day from the heat, and for a refuge and shelter from the storm and the rain" (Is 4:6). In this context, the cloud and fire of God's presence function as a protecting booth over His people.

Being the season of rejoicing for the blessings of the harvest and of God's protective presence, the Feast of Tabernacles provided the ideal setting for the birth of Jesus—the One who came to well among the people in person. The themes of rejoicing relate perfectly to the terminology used by the angel to announce Christ's birth: "Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people" (Luke 2:10). As "the season of our joy," the Feast of Tabernacles provided the ideal settings for breaking "the good news of a great joy" for all the people, since the feast was also a celebration for all the nations (Zech 14:16).

A final interesting sideline supporting the possibility that Christ was born at the very time of the Feast of Tabernacles, is the reference to the wise men that came from the East to visit Christ (Matt 2:1). The land of the East is most likely Babylon, where many

Jews still lived at the time of Christ's birth. Only a remnant of the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile to Palestine during the Persian period. The wise men, most likely, were rabbis known in Hebrew as *chakamin*, which means wise men.

We are told that the wise men made their journey from the East to Bethlehem because they had seen "the star in the East" (Matt 2:1). Watching the stars was associated especially with the Feast of Tabernacles. In fact, the roof of the booth was built with leafy branches carefully spaced so that they would screen out the sunlight without blocking the visibility of the stars. The people watched for the stars at night during the feast because of the prophecy "a star shall come out of Jacob" (Num 24:17). It is possible that it was during the Feast of Tabernacles, the special season of star watching, that the wise men saw the Messianic star and "rejoiced exceedingly with great joy" (Matt 2:10).

In the light of the foregoing considerations, most likely Christ's birth coincided with the Feast of Tabernacles. Being the feast of thanksgiving for God's willingness to protect His people with the tabernacle of His presence during the wilderness sojourning, it could serve fittingly to celebrate Christ's willingness to become a human being and pitch His tent among us in order to become our Savior.

The implications of this conclusion are self-evident. The Feast of Tabernacles in September/October provides Christians today with much more accurate Biblical timing and typology for celebrating Christ's birth, than the pagan dating of December 25th. The latter date not only is removed from the actual time of Christ's birth, but is also derived from the pagan celebration of the return of the sun after the winter solstice. Why celebrate the birth of Jesus at the wrong time of December 25th,—a date derived from pagan sun-worship—when the Bible provides us with a more appropriate timing and typology for commemorating such an important event?

Some Historical Support for Christ's Birth at the Feast of Tabernacles

The connection between Christ's birth and the Feast of Tabernacles proposed above, may at first appear astonishing, but it has been proposed not only by modern authors[6] but also by early Christian Fathers. In his classic study *The Bible and Liturgy*, Jean Daniélou discusses the connection between the Feast of Tabernacles and that of the Nativity in the writings of some Church Fathers.[7] He notes, for example, that in his *Sermon on the Nativity*, Gregory of Nazianzus (A. D. 329-389) connects the Feast of the Nativity of December 25th with the Feast of Tabernacle: "The subject of today's feast (25th December) is the true Feast of Tabernacles. Indeed, in this feast, the human tabernacle was built up by Him who put on human nature because of us. Our tabernacles, which were struck down by death, are raised up again by Him Who built our dwelling from the beginning. Therefore, harmonizing our voices with that of David, let us also sing the Psalm: 'Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord' [Ps 118:26. This verse was sung during the procession of the Feast of Tabernacles]. How does He come? Not in a boat or in a chariot. But He comes into human existence by the immaculate Virgin. It is He, Our Lord, who has appeared to make the solemn feast day in thick branches of foliage up to the horns of the altar."[8]

In the last sentence, Gregory alludes to the ancient Jewish custom of erecting a canopy over the altar during the Feast of Tabernacles by tying branches to the four horns of the altar. For Gregory, this ceremony finds its fulfillment in the Incarnation. Commenting on this text, Daniélou writes: "The coming of Christ, His birth, thus is seen to be the inauguration of the true Feast of Tabernacles. Here appears a new harmony: the *scenai* [Greek for 'the tent'], the human dwelling at the beginning, have been struck by sin. . . . Christ comes to raise them up, to restore human nature, to inaugurate the true Feast of Tabernacles prefigured in Jewish liturgy. And the beginning of this *Scenopegia* [Feast of Tabernacles] is the Incarnation itself in which, according to St. John, Christ built the tabernacles of His own Body (John 1:14). It does indeed seem as if it were this term of St. John which makes the connection between the feast of the scenai [Tabernacles] and the feast of the Birth of Christ."[9]

What contributed to make the connection between the birth of Jesus and the Feast of Tabernacles, was not only John's representation of the Incarnation as Christ pitching His tent among us, but also the Messianic understanding of Psalm 118:26-27, a psalm that was sung by the Jews during the processions of the Feast of Tabernacles and that was used by the Fathers to link the two feasts. The Psalm announces "He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Ps 118:26)—a clear allusion to the coming of the Messiah—in the context of the Feast of Tabernacles: "The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar!" (Ps 118:27).

Church Fathers saw in these passages a representation of the coming of the Messiah through the typology of the Feast of Tabernacles. Gregory of Nissa (about A. D. 330-395) remarks that "The prophet David tells us that the God of the universe, the Lord of the world has appeared to us to constitute the solemn Feast in the thick branches of foliage."[10] "The thick branches of foliage" refer to the Feast of Tabernacles which was celebrated in booths made of leafy branches. The booths are seen as foreshadowing the Incarnation which made it possible for Christ to dwell among us.

Daniélou finds that traces of the patristic connection between the Feast of Tabernacles and that of the Nativity still survive in the current use of the Messianic verses 23, 28, 29 of Psalm 118 during "the Gradual of the Second Mass of Christmas" celebrated in Catholic Churches. He concludes: "It is indeed at Christmas that the eschatological tabernacle was built for the first time, when the Word 'established His dwelling amongst us' and the unity of men and angels was restored when the angels visited the shepherds."[11]

Unfortunately, the connection between Christ's birth and the Feast of Tabernacles was gradually lost as the pagan symbology of the sun displaced the Biblical typology of the Feast of Tabernacles. The attempt of the Fathers to connect the Feast of Tabernacles with Christmas was not successful because the two feasts differ in origin, meaning, and authority. By adopting the date of December 25th, which was the pagan feast of the birthday of the Invincible Sun (*dies natalis Solis Invicti*),[12] the Christological meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles was gradually lost—as indicated by the fact that today nobody thinks of Christmas as being the antitypical fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles, when Christ became flesh and tabernacled with us, in order to accomplish His redemptive plan to tabernacle with us throughout eternity in the world to come.

The Pagan Origin of Date of Christmas

The adoption of the 25th of December for the celebration of Christmas is perhaps the most explicit example of Sun-worship's influence on the Christian liturgical calendar. It is a known fact that the pagan feast of the *dies natalis Solis Invicti*—the birthday of the Invincible Sun, was held on that date.[13] Do Christian sources openly admit the borrowing of the date of such a pagan festivity? Generally not. To admit borrowing a pagan festival, even after due reinterpretation of its meaning, would be tantamount to an open betrayal of the faith. This the Fathers were anxious to avoid.

An exception is the comment of an unknown Syrian writer who wrote in the margin of the *Expositio in Evangelia* of Bar-salibaeus as follows: "It was a solemn rite among the pagans to celebrate the festival of the rising of the sun on this very day, December 25th. Furthermore, to augment the solemnity of the day, they were accustomed to kindle fires, to which rites they were accustomed to invite and admit even Christian people. When therefore the Teachers observed that Christians were inclined to this custom, they contrived a council and established on this day the festival of the true Rising"[15]

The commemoration of the birth of the Sun-god was not easily forgotten by Christians. Augustine and Leo the Great strongly reprimanded those Christians who at Christmas worshiped the Sun rather than the birth of Christ.[15] Therefore, it is well to keep in mind that in the investigation of the influence of the Sun-cults on the Christian liturgy,

the most we can hope to find are not direct but indirect indications. This warning applies not only for the date of Christmas but for that of Sunday as well.

Astronomical/Allegorical Speculations

Few scholars maintain that the date of the 25th of December was derived from astronomical-allegorical observations. It was the opinion of some Fathers that both the conception and passion of Christ occurred at the time of the vernal equinox on the 25th of March.[16] Reckoning from that date the nine months of pregnancy of Mary, the date of the birth of Christ was computed to be the 25th of December.

0scar Cullmann rightly observes that these computations "can scarcely have given the initiative."[17] They seem to represent rather an *a posteriori* rationale advanced to justify an already existing date and practice. To the majority of scholars, as stated by J. A. Jungmann, "It has become progressively clear that the real reason for the choice of the 25th of December was the pagan feast of the *dies natalis Solis Invicti* which was celebrated in those days with great splendor."[18]

In his dissertation *The Cult of Sol Invictus,* Gaston H. Halsberghe similarly concludes: "The authors whom we consulted on this point are unanimous in admitting the influence of the pagan celebration held in honor of *Deus Sol Invictus* on the 25th of December, the *Natalis Jnvicti,* on the Christian celebration of Christmas. This influence is held to be responsible for the shifting to the 25th of December of the birth of Christ, which had until then been held on the day of the Epiphany, the 6th of January. The celebration of the birth of the Sun god, which was accompanied by a profusion of light and torches and the decoration of branches and small trees, had captivated the followers of the cult to such a degree that even after they had been converted to Christianity they continued to celebrate the feast of the birth of the Sun god."[19]

Let us note that the Church of Rome (as in the case of Easter-Sunday so in the question of the celebration of Christmas) pioneered and promoted the adoption of the new date. In fact the first explicit indication that on the 25th of December Christians celebrated Christ's birthday, is found in a Roman document known as *Chronograph of 354* (a calendar attributed to Fuzious Dionysius Philocalus), where it says: *"VIII Kal. Jan. natus Christus in Betleem Judaeae*—On the eighth calends of January [i.e., December 25th] Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea."[20]

That the Church of Rome introduced and championed this new date, is accepted by most scholars. For instance, Mario Righetti, a renowned Catholic liturgist who is the author of a four volumes set on ***STORIA LITURGICA* (*A HISTORY OF LITURGY*)**, writes: "After the peace the Church of Rome, to facilitate the acceptance of the faith by the pagan masses, found it convenient to institute the 25th of December as the feast of the temporal birth of Christ, to divert them from the pagan feast, celebrated on the same day in honor of the "Invincible Sun" Mithras, the conqueror of darkness."[21]

In the Orient, however, the birth and the baptism of Jesus were celebrated respectively on January 5 and 6. B. Botte, a Belgian Benedictine scholar, in a significant study concludes that this date also evolved from an originally pagan feast, namely *Epiphany,* which commemorated the birth and growth of light.[22] It was not an easy task for the Church of Rome to get the Eastern churches to accept the new date of December 25th, since many of them "firmly adhered to the practice of observing the festival of Christ's birth in its old form as an Epiphany festival on January 5th-6th."[81]

It would take us beyond our immediate scope to trace the process of adoption by the various Christian communities of the Roman Christmas date of December 25. It will be sufficient to notice that the adoption of the date of December 25th for the celebration of Christ's birth shows not only of the influence of the Sun-cult, but also of the primacy exerted by the Church of Rome in promoting the adoption of the pagan holidays of *Dies Solis* (the Day of the Sun) and *Natalis Solis Invicti* (the birthday of the Invincible Sun) held on December 25.

Conclusion

The birth of Jesus is of incomparable importance to the Christian faith. Without the birth of Christ there would be no baptism, death, resurrection, ascension, outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Christ's intercession in the heavenly sanctuary, and Second Advent.

The date of Christ's birth most likely coincided with the Feast of Tabernacles that falls late in September or early in October. Being the feast of thanksgiving for God's willingness to protect His people with the tabernacle of His presence during the wilderness sojourning, it could serve fittingly to celebrate Christ's willingness to become a human being and pitch His tent among us in order to become our Savior.

The time of the Feast of Tabernacles provides Christians today with a more accurate Biblical timing and typology for celebrating Christ's birth, than the pagan dating of December 25th. The latter date not only is removed from the actual time of Christ's birth, but is also derived from the pagan celebration of the birth of the Sun-god. Why celebrate Christ's birth at the wrong time of the year because of a pagan tradition, when we can observe it at the right season on the basis of sound biblical reasons?

From a biblical perspective the birth of Jesus is connected with three major themes: (1) adoration and worship (Luke 2:8-12); (2) the giving of gifts to God (Matt 2:1-11); and proclamation of peace and goodwill (Luke 2:13-14). May our celebration of Christ's birth, at any time of the year, incorporate these essential elements: worship, giving, and praise.

ENDNOTES

1. Oscar Cullmann, *The Early Church* (1956), p. 35.
2. See A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (New York, 1992), p. 267.
3. See, Adam Clark, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (New York, 1956), vol. 5, p. 370.
4. Barney Kasdan, *God's Appointed Times* (Baltimore, MD, 1993), p. 97.
5. Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, P. 540.
6. See, for example, Edward Chumney, *The Seven Festivals of the Messiah* (Shippensburg, PA, 1994), pp. 178-184; Barney Kasdan, *God's Appointed Times* (Baltimore, MD, 1993), pp. 95-99.
7. Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and Liturgy* (South Bend, IN, 1956), pp. 343-347.
8. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Sermon on the Nativity, Patrologia Graeca* 46, 1129 B-C, translated by Jean Daniélou (note 7), p. 345.
9. Jean Daniélou (note 7), p. 345.
10. Gregory of Nissa, *Pychnazomena*, Psalm 118:27, translated by Jean Daniélou (note 7), p. 344.
11. Jean Daniélou (note 7), p. 347.
12. For a study of the influence of sun-worship on the Christian adoption of December 25 for the celebration of Christ's birth, see my dissertation, *From Sabbath to Sunday. A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome, Italy, 1977), pp. 256-261.
13. In the Philocalian calendar (A.D. 354) the 25th of December is designated as "N[atalis] *Invicti—The* birthday of the invincible one" *(CIL* I, part 2, p. 236); Julian the Apostate, a nephew of Constantine and a devotee of Mithra, says regarding this pagan festival: "Before the beginning of the year, at the end of the month which is called after Saturn [December], we celebrate in honor of Helios [the Sun] the most splendid games, and we dedicate the festival to the Invincible Sun. That festival may the ruling gods grant me to praise and to celebrate with sacrifice! And above all the others may Helios [the Sun] himself, the king of all, grant me this" (Julian, *The Orations of Julian, Hymn to King Helios* 155, *LCL* p. 429); Franz Cumont, *Astrology and Religion Among Greeks and Romans,* 1960, p. 89: "A very general observance required that on the 25th of December the birth of the 'new Sun' should be celebrated, when after the winter solstice the days began to lengthen and the 'invincible' star triumphed again over darkness"; for texts on the Mithraic celebration of Dec. 25th see *CIL* I, p. 140; Gordon J. Laing, *Survivals of Roman Religion,* 1931, pp. 58-65, argues persuasively that many of the customs of the ancient Roman Saturnalia (Dec. 17-23) were transferred to the Christmas season.
14. J. S. Assemanus, *Bibliotheca orientalis* 2, 164, trans. by P. Cotton, *From Sabbath to Sunday,* 1933, pp. 144-145.
15. Augustine, *Sermo in Nativit ate Domini* 7, PL 38, 1007 and 1032, enjoins Christians to worship at Christmas not the sun but its Creator; Leo the Great rebukes those Christians who at Christmas celebrated the birth of the sun rather than that of Christ *(Sermon* 27, *In Nativitate Domini, PL* 54, 218).
16. L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution,* 1919, pp. 260f., presents this hypothesis as a possibility. M. Righetti, *Manuale di Storia Liturgica,* 1955, II, pp. 68-69, explains that the date of March 25th "though historically unfounded, was based on astronomical-allegorical considerations, namely that on the day of the vernal equinox the world was created." According to this theory, on the same date of March 25 creation began and Christ, as Augustine says, was "conceived and crucified" *(De trinitate* 4, 5, *PL* 42, 894); cf. Hippolytus, *In Danielem commentarius* 4, 23, for a similar view.
17. 0scar Cullmann, *The Early Church,* 1956, p. 29.
18. Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great,* 1962, p. 147; L. Duchesne (fn. 74), p. 26, also recognizes this as a more plausible explanation: "A better explanation is that based on the festival of *Natalis Invicti,* which appears in the pagan calendar of the Philocalian collection under the 25th of December. . . .One is inclined to believe that the Roman Catholic Church made the choice of the 25th of December in order to enter into rivalry with Mithraism"; John Ferguson, *The Religions of the Roman Empire,* 1970, p. 239, defends the same view; cf. Franz Cumont (Franz

Cumont, *Astrology and Religion Among Greeks and Romans,* 1960), p. 89: "It appears certain that the commemoration of the nativity was placed on December 25, because on the winter solstice was celebrated the rebirth of the invincible god. B y adopting this date ... the ecclesiastical authorities purified somehow some pagan customs which they could not suppress."

19. Gaston H. Halsberghe, *The Cult of Sol Invictus,* 1972, p. 174.
20. T. Mommsen, *Chronography of Philocalus of the Year* 354, 1850, p. 631; L. Duchesne, *Bulletin critique,* 1890, p. 41, has established that the calendar goes back to 336, because the *Depositio ma rtyrum* is preceded in the Philocalian by the *Depositium episcoporum* of Rome, which lists Sylvester (d. A.D. 335) as the last pope.
21. Mario Righetti, *Manuale di Storia Liturgica,* 1955, II, p. 67.
22. B. Botte, "Les Denominations du dimanche dans la tradition chrétienne," *Le Dimanche,* Lex Orandi 39, 1965, pp. 14ff.
23. 0scar Cullmann, *The Early Church,* 1956, p.32.

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The Plain Truth About CHRISTMAS



The Plain Truth About CHRISTMAS

by Herbert W. Armstrong

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Where did the world get Christmas? . . . from the Bible, or paganism?

Here are the astonishing facts which may shock you! Test yourself. How much do you know of the origin of the Christmas tree—of "Santa Claus"—of the mistletoe—of the holly wreath—of the custom of exchanging gifts?









"***Christmas is** for the children,*" *it is often said. Few people, however, realize where the many customs associated with the Christmas season came from.*

WHEN I was a very little boy, I was taught to hang up my stockings on Christmas eve. When I awakened the next morning, they were filled with small toys and sacks or little boxes of candy and nuts. And beside the mantle, from which my stockings hung, a Christmas tree had suddenly appeared, decorated with shiny tinsel. And on it hung presents. Other presents for us children were piled on the floor underneath. I was told Santa Claus had come down the chimney during the night and left all these things.

But did I question what my parents had told me? Of course not. I accepted it—took it all for granted. Didn't you?

Stop and think a moment! Very few have ever reflected on *why* they believe what they do—*why* they follow the customs they do, or from *where* those customs came. We were born into a world filled with customs. We grew up accepting them without question.

Why? Sheep instinct? Well, not exactly.

But by nature we do tend to follow the crowd, whether right or wrong. Sheep follow others to the slaughter. Humans ought to check up where they are going.

How—*when* did Christmas originate?

Does Christmas *really* celebrate the birthday of Christ? Was Jesus born on December 25th?

Did the original apostles, who knew Jesus personally and were taught by Him, celebrate His birthday on December 25th? Did they celebrate it *at all*?

If Christmas is the chief of the Christian holidays, *why* do so many non-Christians observe it? Do you know?

Why do people exchange presents with family members, friends, relatives, at Christmas time? Was it because the wise men presented gifts to the Christ-child? The answer may surprise you.

Most people have "supposed" a lot of things about Christmas that are not true. But let's quit "supposing" and *get the facts!*

What Encyclopedias Say

The word "Christmas" means "Mass of Christ," or, as it came to be shortened, "Christ-Mass." It came to non-Christians and Protestants from the Roman Catholic Church. And where did they get it? NOT from the New Testament—NOT from the Bible—NOT from the original apostles who were personally instructed by Christ—but it gravitated *in the fourth century* into the Roman Church from *paganism*.

Since the celebration of Christmas has come to the world from the Roman Catholic Church, and has no authority but that of the Roman Catholic Church, let us examine the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911 edition, published by that church. Under the heading "Christmas," you will find:

"Christmas was *not* among the earliest festivals of the Church...the first evidence of the feast *is from Egypt*." "*Pagan customs* centering around the January calends gravitated to Christmas."

And in the same encyclopedia, under the heading "Natal Day," we find that the early Catholic father, Origen, acknowledged this truth: "...In the Scriptures, no one is recorded to have kept a feast or held a great banquet on his birthday. It is *only sinners* [like Pharaoh and Herod] who make great rejoicings over the day in which they were born into *this* world" (emphasis ours).

Encyclopedia Britannica, 1946 edition, has this: "Christmas (i.e., the Mass of Christ).... Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church...."It was not instituted by Christ or the apostles, or by Bible authority. It was picked up afterward from paganism. The *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1944 edition, says: "Christmas....It was, according to many authorities, not celebrated in the first centuries of the Christian church, as the Christian usage in general was to celebrate the death of remarkable persons rather than their birth...." (The "Communion," which *is* instituted by New Testament Bible authority, is a memorial of the death of Christ.) "...A feast was established in memory of this event [Christ's birth] *in the fourth century*. In the fifth century the Western Church ordered it to be celebrated forever *on the day of the old Roman feast of the birth of Sol*, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed."

Now notice! These recognized historical authorities show Christmas was not observed by Christians for the first two or three hundred years—a period longer than the entire history of the United States as a nation! It got into the Western, or Roman, Church, by the fourth century A.D. It was not until the fifth century that the Roman Church ordered it to be celebrated as an official Christian festival!

Jesus Not Born December 25th

Jesus was not even born in the winter season! When the Christ-child was born "there were in the same country shepherds *abiding* in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8). This never could have occurred in Judaea in the month of December. The shepherds always brought their flocks from the mountainsides and fields and corralled them not later than October 15, to protect them from the cold, rainy season that followed that date. Notice that the Bible itself proves, in Song of Solomon 2:11 and Ezra 10:9, 13, that winter was a rainy season not permitting shepherds to abide in open fields at night.

"It was an ancient custom among Jews of those days to send out their sheep to the fields and deserts about the Passover (early spring), and bring them home at commence-

ment of the *first rain*," says the *Adam Clarke Commentary* (Vol. 5, page 370, New York ed.)

Continuing, this authority states: "During the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day. As...the first rain began early in the month of Marchesvan, which answers to part of our October and November [begins sometime in *October*], we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole *summer*. And, as these shepherds had not *yet* brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that October had not yet commenced, and that, consequently, our Lord was not born on the *25th of December*, when no flocks were out in the fields; nor could He have been born later than *September*, as the flocks were still in the fields *by night*. On this very ground, the *nativity* in *December* should be given up. The feeding of the flocks by night in the fields is a *chronological fact*...See the quotations from the *Talmudists* in *Lightfoot*."

Any encyclopedia, or any other authority, will tell you that Christ was not born on December 25. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* frankly states this fact.

The exact date of Jesus' birth is entirely unknown, as all authorities acknowledge—though if I had space in this booklet I could show you scriptures which at least strongly indicate it was in the early fall—probably September approximately six months after Passover.

If God had wished us to observe and celebrate Christ's birthday, He would not have so completely hidden the exact date.

How This Pagan Custom Got into the Church

Then how did this pagan custom creep into the Western Christian world?

The *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* explains it clearly, in its article on "Christmas": "How much the date of the festival depended upon the pagan Brumalia (Dec. 25) following the Saturnalia (Dec. 17-24), and celebrating the shortest day of the year and the 'new sun'...cannot be accurately determined. The pagan Saturnalia and Brumalia *were too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence*....The pagan









In the Western world *Christmas is the most important religious and commercial season of the year. But exactly what do the various Christmas customs have to do with the birth of Jesus?*

festival with its riot and merrymaking was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit and in manner. Christian preachers of the West and the Near East protested against the unseemly frivolity with which Christ's birthday was celebrated, while Christians of Mesopotamia *accused their Western brethren of idolatry and sun worship for adopting as Christian this pagan festival*."

Remember, the Roman world had been pagan. Prior to the fourth century, Christians were few in number, though increasing, and were persecuted by the government and by pagans. But, with the advent of Constantine as emperor, who made his profession of Christianity in the fourth century, placing Christianity on an equal footing with paganism, people of the Roman world began to accept this now-popular Christianity by the hundreds of thousands.

But remember, these people had grown up in pagan customs, chief of which was this idolatrous festival of December 25th. It was a festival of merrymaking, with its special spirit. They enjoyed it! They didn't want to give it up! Now this same article in the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* explains how the recognition by Constantine of Sunday, which had been the day of pagan sun worship, and how the influence of the pagan Manichaeism, which identified the SON of God with the physical SUN, gave these pagans of the fourth century, now turning over wholesale to "Christianity," their excuse for calling their pagan-festival date of December 25th (birthday of the SUN-god), the birthday of the SON of God.

And *that* is how "Christmas" became fastened on our Western world! We may call it by another name, but it's the same old pagan sun-worshipping festival still! The only change is in what we call it! You can *call* a rabbit a "lion," but it's still a rabbit, just the same.

Again from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: "Certain Latins, as early as 354, may have transferred the birthday from January 6th to *December 25, which was then a Mithraic feast... or birthday of the unconquered SUN...* The Syrians and Armenians, who clung to January 6th, accused the Romans of sun worship and idolatry, contending...that

the feast of December 25th, had been invented by disciples of Cerinthus...."

The Real Origin of Christmas

But if we got Christmas from the Roman Catholics, and they got it from paganism, where did the pagans get it? Where, when, and what was its real origin?

It is a chief custom of the corrupt system denounced all through Bible prophecies and teachings under the name of Babylon. And it started and originated in the original Babylon of ancient Nimrod! Yes, it stems from roots whose beginning was shortly this side of the Flood!

Nimrod, grandson of Ham, son of Noah, was the real founder of the Babylonish system that has gripped the world ever since—the system of organized competition—of man-ruled governments and empires, based upon the competitive and profit-making economic system. Nimrod built the tower of Babel, the original Babylon, ancient Nineveh, and many other cities. He organized this world's first *kingdom*. The name Nimrod, in Hebrew, is derived from "Marad," meaning "he rebelled."

From many ancient writings, considerable is learned of this man, who started the great organized worldly apostasy from God that has dominated this world until now. Nimrod was so evil, it is said he married his own mother, whose name was Semiramis. After Nimrod's untimely death, his so-called mother-wife, Semiramis, propagated the evil doctrine of the survival of Nimrod as a spirit being. She claimed a full-grown evergreen tree sprang overnight from a dead tree stump, which symbolized the springing forth unto new life of the dead Nimrod. On each anniversary of his birth, she claimed, Nimrod would visit the evergreen tree and leave gifts upon it. December 25th was the birthday of Nimrod. This is the real origin of the Christmas tree.

Through her scheming and designing, Semiramis became the Babylonian "Queen of Heaven," and Nimrod, under various names, became the "divine son of heaven." Through the generations, in this idolatrous worship, Nimrod also became the false Messiah, son of Baal the Sun-god. In this false *Babylonish* system, the "Mother and Child" (Semiramis











***Colorful costumes**, blinking lights, decorated trees, the burning of the yule log, the hanging of the mistletoe and holly, the exchanging of gifts, merry-making and song-singing—a description of a modern Christmas?*

Not really. These and other festive customs were commonplace in various nations of Europe around the end of December and the beginning of January centuries before Jesus was born!

and Nimrod reborn) became chief objects of worship. This worship of "Mother and Child" spread over the world. The names varied in different countries and languages. In Egypt it was Isis and Osiris. In Asia, Cybele and Deoius. In pagan Rome, Fortuna and Jupiterpuer. Even in Greece, China, Japan, Tibet is to be found the counterpart of the Madonna, *long before the birth of Christ!*

Thus, during the fourth and fifth centuries, when the pagans of the Roman world were "accepting" the new popular "Christianity" by the hundreds of thousands, carrying their old pagan customs and beliefs along with them, merely cloaking them with Christian-sounding names, the Madonna and "Mother and Child" idea also became popularized, especially at Christmas time. Every Christmas season you'll hear sung and chanted dozens of times the hymn "Silent Night, Holy Night," with its familiar "Mother and Child" theme. We, who have been born in such a babylonish world, reared and steeped in these things all our lives, have been taught to revere these things as holy and sacred. We never questioned to see where they came from—whether they came from the Bible, or from pagan idolatry!

We are shocked to learn the truth—some, unfortunately, take offense at the plain truth! But God commands His faithful ministers, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression!" Shocking as these facts are, they are the plain facts of history and the Bible!

The real origin of Christmas goes back to ancient Babylon. It is bound up in the organized apostasy which has gripped a deceived world these many centuries! In Egypt, it was always believed that the son of Isis (Egyptian name for "Queen of Heaven") was born December 25th. Paganism celebrated this famous birthday over most of the known world for centuries before the birth of Christ.

December 25th is not the birthday of Jesus the true Christ! The apostles and early true Church never celebrated Christ's birthday at *any* time. There is no command or instruction to celebrate it in the Bible—rather, the celebrating of birthdays is a pagan, not a Christian custom, believe it or not!

Thus the ancient idolatrous "Chaldean Mysteries," founded by this wife of Nimrod, have been handed down through the pagan religions under new Christian-sounding names.

Origin of Holly Wreath, Mistletoe, Yule Log

Now where did we get this mistletoe custom? Among the ancient pagans the mistletoe was used at this festival of the winter solstice because it was considered sacred to the sun, because of its supposed miraculous healing power. The pagan custom of kissing under the mistletoe was an early step in the night of revelry and drunken debauchery—celebrating the death of the "old sun" and the birth of the new at the winter solstice. Mistletoe, sacred in pagan festivals, is a parasite!

Holly berries were also considered sacred to the sun-god. The yule log is in reality the "sun log." "Yule" means "wheel," a pagan symbol of the sun. Yet today professing Christians speak of the "sacred yule-tide season"!

Even the lighting of fires and candles as a Christian ceremony is merely a continuation of the pagan custom, encouraging the waning sun-god as he reached the lowest place in the southern skies!

The *Encyclopedia Americana* says: "The holly, the mistletoe, the Yule log...are relics of pre-Christian times." Of paganism!

The book *Answers to Questions*, compiled by Frederick J. Haskins, found in public libraries, says: "The use of Christmas wreaths is believed by authorities to be *traceable to the pagan customs* of decorating buildings and places of worship at the feast which took place at the same time as Christmas. *The Christmas tree is from Egypt*, and its origin dates from a period long anterior to the Christian Era."

Yes, and Even Santa Claus!

But surely dear old Santa Claus is not a creature of pagan birth? But he is, and his real character is not so benevolent and holy as many suppose!

The name "Santa Claus" is a corruption of the name "St. Nicholas," a Roman Catholic bishop who lived in the 5th century. Look in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, volume 19,

pages 648-649, 11th edition, where you'll read: "St. Nicholas, bishop of Myra, a saint honored by the Greeks and Latins on the 6th of December. . . . A legend of his surreptitious bestowal of dowries on the three daughters of an impoverished citizen...is said to have originated the old custom of giving presents in secret on the Eve of St. Nicholas [Dec. 6], subsequently transferred to Christmas day. Hence the association of Christmas with Santa Claus.... "

Through the year, parents punish their children for telling falsehoods. Then, at Christmas time, they themselves tell their little children this "Santa Claus" lie! Is it any wonder many of them, when they grow up and learn the truth, begin to believe God is a myth, too?

One little fellow, sadly disillusioned about "Santa Claus," said to a playmate, "Yes, and I'm going to look into this 'Jesus Christ' business, too!" Is it Christian to teach children myths and falsehoods? God says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness!" It may *seem* right, and be justified by human reason, but God says, "There is a way that *seemeth* right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death!" "Old Nick" also is a term for the devil! Is there a connection? Satan appears as an "angel of light," to deceive! (II Cor. 11:14; Rev. 12:9.)

And so when we examine the facts, we are astonished to learn that the practice of observing Christmas is not, after all, a true Christian practice, but a pagan custom—one of the ways of Babylon our people have fallen into!

What the Bible Says About the Christmas Tree

But if the Bible is silent about telling us to observe Christmas, or recording any such observance by the apostles or early true Church, it *does* have something to say about the Christmas tree!

This will come as a real surprise to many. But here it is:

Jeremiah 10:2-6: "Thus saith the Lord, *Learn not the way of the heathen. . . . For the customs of the people are vain*: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not."

There is a perfect description of the Christmas tree, termed by the Eternal as "the way of the heathen—the customs of the people." We are commanded not to learn that way or follow it! It is also viewed in this passage as idolatry. The fifth verse shows that these trees cannot speak—cannot walk—must be carried. "Be not afraid of them; for *they* [the trees] cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good." They are not gods to be feared. Some people *mis*read this to make it say there is no harm in having a Christmas tree, but that is not what it says.

Isn't Exchanging Gifts Scriptural?

But when it comes to the most important part of all in this Christmas observance—the Christmas shopping season—the buying and exchanging of gifts—many will exclaim triumphantly, "Well, at least the Bible tells us to do that! Didn't the wise men give gifts when Christ was born?"

Again, we are due for some surprises, when we learn the plain truth. First, let's look at the historic origin of trading gifts back and forth, then see exactly what the Bible *does* say about it.

From the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, volume 12, pages 153-155, we quote: "The interchange of presents between friends is alike characteristic of Christmas and the Saturnalia, and *must have been adopted by Christians from the Pagans*, as the admonition of Tertullian plainly shows."

The fact is, this custom fastened upon people of exchanging gifts with friends and relatives at the Christmas season *has not a single trace of Christianity about it,* strange though that may seem! This does not celebrate Christ's birthday nor honor it or Him! Suppose someone you love has a birthday. You want to honor that person on his or her birthday. Would you lavishly buy gifts for *everyone else*, trading gifts back and forth with all your *other* friends and loved ones, but ignore completely any gift for the one whose birthday you are honoring? Rather absurd, when viewed in that light, isn't it?

Yet this is exactly what people the world over are doing! They honor a day that is not Christ's birthday by spending every dime they can scrape together in buying presents to

trade back and forth among friends and relatives. But I can say by years of experience, as I believe most pastors and ministers can say, that when the month of December rolls around, nearly all professing Christians forget to give gifts to Christ and His cause almost altogether! December often is the most difficult month to keep Christ's work from dying! People are too busy trading gifts back and forth among themselves to think of Him and His Work, it seems. Then, in January and even into February it seems they have to catch up from what they spent for Christmas, so they seldom get back to normal in supporting Christ and His Work before March!

Now consider what the Bible says about the wise men giving gifts when Christ was born. It is in Matthew 2:1-11. "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born *King of the Jews*?...And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: *and when they had opened their treasures*, they presented unto HIM gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

Why Gifts Presented to Christ

Notice, they inquired for the child Jesus, who was born KING of the Jews! Now why did they present gifts to Him? Because it was His birthday? Not at all, because they came several days or weeks after the date of His birth! Was it to set an example for us, today, to trade gifts back and forth among ourselves? No, notice carefully! They did not exchange gifts among themselves, but "they presented unto HIM gifts." They gave their gifts to Christ, not to their friends, relatives, or one another!

Why? Let me quote from the *Adam Clarke Commentary*, volume 5, page 46: "Verse 11. (*They presented unto him gifts*.) The people of the east never approach the presence of kings and great personages, without a *present* in their hands. The custom is often noticed in the Old Testament, and still prevails in the east, and in some of the newly discovered South Sea Islands."

There it is! They were not instituting a new Christian

custom of exchanging gifts with friends to honor Christ's birthday. They were following an old and ancient eastern custom of presenting gifts to a king when they came into his presence. They were approaching Him, born KING of the Jews, *in person*. Therefore custom required they present gifts—even as the Queen of Sheba brought gifts to Solomon—even as many people today take a gift along when they visit the White House for an appointment with the President.

No, the custom of trading gifts back and forth does not stem from this scriptural incident at all, but rather, as quoted from history above, it is the *continuance* of an ancient pagan custom. Instead of honoring Christ, it invariably retards His Work, often sets it back, at the Christmas season every year.

Does It Really Honor Christ?

Now come two arguments often used to justify Christmas observance.

1) Many will reason this way: "But, even though the exact date of Jesus' birth is unknown, should we not select *some* date to celebrate as His birthday?" The answer is positively no! Did you not notice the statement quoted from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*: "Sinners alone, not saints, celebrate their birthdays." The celebration of birthdays is not a Christian, but a pagan custom, observed by sinners!

2) But, many still reason, "Even so—even though Christmas was a pagan custom, honoring the false sun-god, we don't observe it to honor the false god, we observe it to honor Christ."

But how does GOD answer in His Word? "Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them [the pagans in their customs]. . . that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Eternal, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods" (Deut. 12:30-31).

God says plainly in His Instruction Book to us, that He will not accept that kind of worship, even though intended in His honor. To Him, He says, it is offering what is *abominable* to Him, and therefore it honors, not Him, but false pagan

gods. GOD says we must not worship Him according to the "dictates of our own conscience"—a term we often hear. But Jesus said plainly, "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). And what is truth? God's Word—the Holy Bible—said Jesus, is truth (John 17:17); and the Bible says God will not accept worship when people take a pagan custom or manner of worship and try to honor Christ with it.

Again, Jesus said: "*In vain* they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). Christmas observance is a *tradition of men*, and the commandments of God, as quoted, forbid it. Jesus said, further, "full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

That is precisely what the millions are doing today. They ignore the commandment of God. He commands, regarding taking the customs of the pagans and using them to honor or worship God: "Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God." Still, most people today take that command of God lightly, or as having no validity whatsoever, and follow the tradition of men in observing Christmas.

Make no mistake! God will *allow* you to defy and disobey Him. He will *allow* you to follow the crowd and the traditions of men. He will *allow* you to sin. But He also says there is a day of reckoning coming. As you sow, so shall you reap! Jesus was the *living* Word of God in Person, and the Bible is the *written* Word of God. And we shall be judged, for eternity, by these words! They should not be taken lightly or ignored.

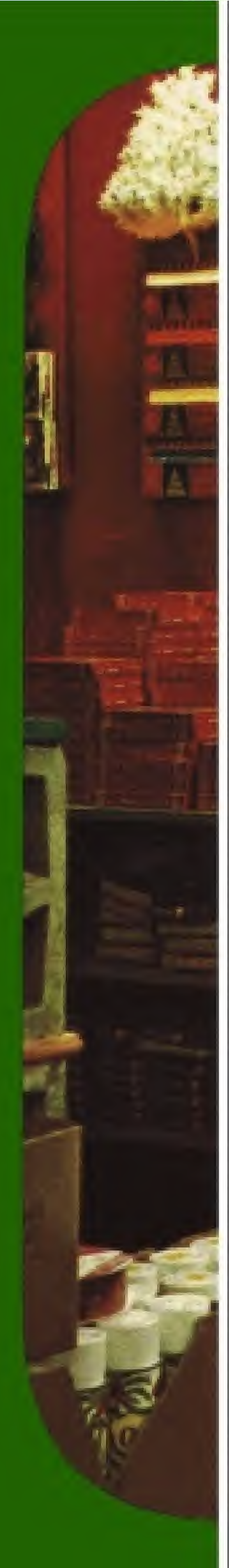
We're in Babylon, and Haven't Known It

Christmas has become a commercial season. It's sponsored, kept alive, by the heaviest retail advertising campaigns of the year. You see a masqueraded "Santa Claus" in many stores. Ads keep us deluded and deceived about the "beautiful Christmas spirit." The newspapers, who sell the ads, print flowery editorials exalting and eulogizing the pagan season, and its "spirit." A gullible people has become so inoculated, many take offense when told the truth. But the "Christmas spirit" is created each year, not to honor Christ, but to sell merchandise! Like all Satan's delusions, it appears as an

"angel of light," is made to appear good. Billions of dollars are spent in this merchandising spree every year, while the cause of Christ must suffer! It's part of the economic system of Babylon!

We have professed to be Christian nations, but we're in Babylon, as Bible prophecy foretold, and we don't know it! "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues"—now soon to fall—is the warning of Revelation 18:4.

This year, instead of gift trading, why not put that money into God's Work?



Only 87½ More Shopping Days til Christmas...

But wait a minute! Have you ever stopped to think about *why* we observe such supposedly Christian holidays as Christmas, Easter, etc? Why doesn't the Bible endorse these holidays? And what days *does* it sanction as holy?

You can discover the answers to these questions in a free booklet, *Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days, Which?*

We think you'll find the truth surprising.